

Charles Kenneth Francis

May 24, 1939 - October 21, 2020



Former director of medicine at Harlem Hospital

Charles Kenneth Francis, Jr. died Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2020, at Robert Wood Johnson Hospital in New Brunswick, N.J.

Born in Newark, N.J., he was the son of the late Charles K. and Gladys Berry Francis.

Funeral services will be held 1 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 29, at the Woody "Home For Services," 163 Oakwood Ave., Orange, N.J., where the family will receive friends from 12:30 p.m. until time of services. Interment will take place at Fairmount Cemetery in Newark.

Charles graduated from Barringer High School, Dartmouth College and Jefferson Medical School. Dr. Francis held professorships at the University of Connecticut and Yale University Medical Schools.

He was the Director of Medicine at Harlem Hospital from 1987 to 1998 and was President of Charles R. Drew University of Medicine in Los Angeles, Calif., from 1999 to 2004.

Charles was the beloved husband of Irma Woody Francis; loving father of Mary Elizabeth (Betsy) and Paul K. He is also survived by a brother, Peter, a niece, two nephews, cousins, other relatives and friends.

This newspaper obit fails to capture much of Charles as a person. To provide some measure of that I am extracting from his entry in our 50th Reunion book.

First, his favorite Dartmouth Memory: The 1958 Dartmouth-Princeton Football Game because it was his first date with Irma Woody (Wellesley '62)

"In looking back over the last 50 years, it is difficult to assess the many ways my experiences at Dartmouth have shaped my personal and professional life. The decision to come to Dartmouth from a public high school in Newark, N.J., as one of two "Negroes" in my class (I was the only one to graduate with my class) was, in retrospect, a courageous decision at the time. The fact that I was able not only to survive but also succeed socially and academically in what was often an inhospitable environment

remains one of my proudest achievements. My Dartmouth experience was enriched not only by the friendships I made while on the track squad, playing in the Marching Band, and in a fraternity (I was blackballed because of my race, but this was rejected by the “brothers”) but also by living and learning with men from diverse cultural, economic, and social backgrounds. . . . My longest lasting friendship with Harry Penn (*dorm-mate and later roommate) began freshman year and continues to this day. My appreciation of music, especially jazz, which remains one of my greatest pleasures, was fueled by memorable trips to New York jazz clubs with a Dartmouth classmate, Matthew Freedman. . . . My early love of the outdoors and fishing, which attracted me to Dartmouth in the first place, was nurtured by my Dartmouth experience and has become one of the joys of my later life.

While I did not realize it at the time, coping with the challenges I faced while at Dartmouth prepared me for the rigors and disciplines of medical school, specialty training, positions on several medical school faculties, and leadership positions in several professional organizations....”

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