



Dr. Joe Wheeler Grisham

December 5, 1931 - January 29, 2025

Dr. Joe Wheeler Grisham, born on a small farm in Brush Creek, TN December 5th 1931 died January 29, 2025 at home in Chapel Hill, NC.

His ancestors and early experiences in middle TN molded his character in untold ways he carried within him for life. His grandfather Warren Grisham was a farmer, ran a small store, and grain mill which ground corn, wheat, barley, and oats, as well as a blacksmith shop mostly repairing plows and wagons for local use. His father ran a dairy until it went under during the depression and also was a renowned teacher and school administrator.

Dr. Grisham was preceded in death by his parents William Wince and Grace Allen Grisham, his older brother William T Grisham, and older sister Rebecca Jane Weaver, as well as his beloved wife of 60 years Jean Evelyn Malone Grisham, who died in 2015. He leaves nieces and nephews, cousins, friends and colleagues all over the world.

Dr. Grisham graduated from Gordonsville High School and received his undergraduate and medical degrees from Vanderbilt University. After marrying his high school sweetheart they moved to St. Louis, MO where he trained in and then taught Pathology at Washington University School of Medicine and Barnes Hospital. In 1961, Dr. Grisham was on research leave at the Makerere Medical College of the University of East Africa in Kampala, Uganda studying

liver cancer until he was summoned by the US Navy. He served as a research radiobiologist Lt. Commander at the US Navy Radiological Defense Laboratory in San Francisco, CA for 2 years, returning to St. Louis MO afterwards.

In 1973, Dr. Grisham became chair of Pathology at the University of Carolina in Chapel Hill, NC. Dr. Grisham made internationally recognized landmark contributions to the understanding of liver function and disease. Over the years, Dr. Grisham helped to form and lead the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at UNC, leading by quiet example and demanding no more of others than himself. According to one of his most beloved colleagues, Nadia Malouf Anderson, he preferred to 'let the flowers bloom' without taking credit as the 'gardener'. Dr. Grisham was an early leader in bringing many more women and minorities to strengthen and diversify the department. And to equalize salaries and overcome other discriminatory differences.

Dr. Grisham remained at UNC until 2003. He then worked at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, MD until 2008. Dr. Grisham has received many awards including the Gold-Headed Cane Award, was inducted into the Order of the LongLeaf Pine, and received the UNC Jonathon B. Howes's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Joe loved science, books, food, wine, and the world. Joe believed in hard work, integrity, fairness, equal rights, and justice. He continued to love Middle TN and came back to the farm as often as he could. Joe especially loved the tomatoes, sweet corn, and peaches in July. This physician, scientist, teacher and humanitarian will be greatly missed.

Graveside services and Interment for Dr. Grisham were held on Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 10AM at the Gordonsville Cemetery.

Cemetery Details

Gordonsville Cemetery

34 Hickman Hwy
Gordonsville, TN 38563