

COURTESY, HALEY FAMILY



Leon Haley Jr.
(second from
left) with his
family in 2010.

See it. Be it.

It's often a parent's first-born who takes the lead in caring for them in their golden years. "I always thought he'd be the one," says Leon Haley Sr. (A&S '55) of his namesake, Leon Haley Jr. (MD '90). Sadly, a watercraft accident changed all that this summer (see obit page 36).

On a recent morning, the grieving father recalls what helps make this devastating loss a little easier for him and his wife, Elizabeth Ann Haley (EDUC '75), to bear:

"Leon's goodness, his grace and his service. And the fact that we had him for a time to enjoy as our son."

The Haleys, both educators with strong religious and social-justice commitments, raised Haley Jr. and his siblings on a steady diet of "service, service, service" in their dinner table chats. In time, they'd watch their eldest carry these convictions with him throughout his career in emergency medicine and hospital administration.

When Haley Jr. was chief of emergency medicine at Grady Memorial Hospital System in Atlanta, "he never let the position stop him from making his rounds," his father says. This habit of treading the halls continued when he moved to UF Health Jacksonville as CEO. Haley Jr. got to know staffers, took an interest in residents' training and made a point of maintaining connections outside of the C suite, colleagues noted on social media.

One likely reason he did so, says Haley Sr., was because as a Black physician, his son knew what a comfort it was for Black patients to see a face they could identify with, especially in moments of vulnerability. Students and trainees in his orbit, too, found reassurance in his mentorship, support and example.

Soon after his death, the Haley family established the Leon L. Haley Jr. MD Scholarship Fund to support tuition and other education-related expenses for Pitt Med up-and-comers, with preference for African American students.

This is exactly what his son would've wanted, says Haley Sr.

"I believe deep down in his heart, my son always felt himself to be a servant of the people."

To make a gift, contact Ed Nemanic: 412-647-5395, egn4@pitt.edu, Giveto.pitt.edu