



Pedro Pablo Ponce

JUN 29, 1928 - FEB 16, 2025



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Pedro Pablo Ponce, MD passed into eternity on Sunday, February 16, 2025, in Ft. Myers, Florida. His was an astounding life that began in Lima, Peru.

Pedro was born June 29, 1928, into poverty. He was naturally super-intelligent—as a child, he won the grand prize on a game show titled “Intelligent Pigs” (and if the family could find that on YouTube, we would be thrilled). But culturally, he had been taught that he was poor because he was stupid. As a teenager, he had to decide what he would do with his life. He did not want to be poor. His parents had taught him that, though they were poor, they were honest, so he would not pursue a life of crime. His only option was to reject the lie that he was stupid and decide to study hard.

This is what he did, with great intensity. He earned scholarships to college, and then to medical school. He practiced internal medicine in Peru including one year in the Peruvian Navy. In 1960, he found sponsorship for a green card to come to the US, where he was required to pass the medical boards in English and complete a US residency program. He studied with even more intensity and re-learned all of his medical knowledge in English. Pedro passed the boards on his first attempt and completed his internship at Chicago’s Michael Reese Medical Center, where he was thankful for the interconnected tunnels that linked his housing to his work. As a Peruvian, he preferred to spend the Chicago winters underground.

In 1962, Pedro was among the first three foreign nationals accepted to the residency program at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital. It was here that he worked with Dr. Sabin and more importantly, he met Gayl Venard, a nurse on staff at University Hospital. They married in 1965, and Pedro worked in private practice in Springdale, Ohio. Decades later, he worked for the Cincinnati Health Department at the Northside Health Center where he treated underserved children until 1997. In the

span of his 35-year career, Dr. Ponce was known as a premier diagnostician, and doctors throughout the city would send him their most puzzling cases. All that studying benefited so



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many families.

In 1975, Pedro and Gayl started attending Northern Hills Bible Chapel with their three children. It was there that Pedro came to place his trust in Jesus Christ as his Resurrected Lord and Savior. And what did Pedro start to do with the Bible? He studied it and continued to do so for the rest of his days.

In 1997, Pedro and Gayl retired to Sanibel Island, Florida where they became involved, year-round citizens and attended Sanibel Community Church. Pedro took up exercise as a main hobby, walking miles on the beach each day and attending aerobic classes at the Recreation Center—the regular ones, because the Seniors' classes were not fast enough for him. He loved to read, and he loved to dance. His family has cherished memories of his dancing at weddings and big parties and saying, "The music...you have to feel it." He also loved his mother tongue and always took time to talk with the Spanish speakers he met on the Island. Usually, the conversation included his mantra to "study hard."

In 2011, Pedro and Gayl moved to Shell Point Retirement Center in Ft. Myers, across from the island. There, they settled into life in their Lucina condo community. Pedro led the monthly 'lunch club' to the Peruvian restaurant in town once a year and attended the Shell Point aerobic classes. Eventually, he concluded he needed more intensity and bought himself his own elliptical machine. If there is a gym and a library in Heaven, we are sure he's already found both.

Pedro was a faithful, loving husband and father. He imprinted his origin story upon his children as a challenge and calling to them to dream big, give their best effort and, of course, to study hard. And while their professional choices and successes made him proud, most

important is that Pedro and Gayl raised Jesus-loving, deeply kind, sincerely humble people who are now blessed to be faithful and loving spouses and parents of their own families.

Pedro's story is beyond belief. All the details read like an inspirational story of fiction. But we knew him. Pedro Pablo Ponce. Dad. Papa Pedro. Grandpa. Dr. Ponce. The Real Thing through and through, and he has left behind a legacy that is its own inspirational story in the making.

Pedro is preceded in death by his beloved Gayl, who passed in November of 2024. He is survived by his children Bryan (and Amy), Elizabeth (and Steve Reichard), and Brent (and Sandi) and by his



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grandchildren, Drew, Will, Anna, Benjamin, Gemma, Rachel, Isabella, and Joshua.



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Nancy Mckenzie posted:

Dr. Ponce was my 4 year olds Dr. She was so sick always being given antibiotics and sent home by other Dr.s without a diagnosis of what was making her so sick. That year she had pneumonia three times Dr. Ponce knew her symptoms and began allergy tests and allergy shots to build her immunity. She finally began to regain her health through his expert care. The other Dr. s did not recognize her severe allergies. I will never forget Dr. Ponce, an outstanding Dr. who made such a difference in our lives. I called him the night she was having trouble breathing. He advised me what to do that night for her congestion and asked me to call him back if she wasn't better . If not, he would meet us at his office. She was better and he saw her the next morning. You have a very allergic child he told me. I know God placed him in our lives the night she was so sick, Dr Ponce who we d never seen before when a friend urged me to call his personal number after work hours. I thank God for Dr. Ponce and his outstanding care of my very sick child!

May 5 at 9:22 AM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Pedro by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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