

Dr. Reza Khatib

A life spent helping others

By Al Peters



Dr. Reza Khatib in 2010

It doesn't take a brain surgeon to enjoy and promote the game of bridge, but if it did, Dr. Reza Khatib could be your man. Reza, now 90, was bitten by

the bridge bug early in his professional life as a celebrated neurologist and brain surgeon. He's been a player, director and bridge teacher, and numerous tournaments and bridge clubs in New York and Florida have enjoyed his continued financial support right up to this age of COVID.

A resident of New York for many years, Reza supported learning activities for young players that were provided through the Nassau-Suffolk Bridge Association. He was a major sponsor in support of sectional tournaments on Long Island.

Reza and wife of 58 years, Georgianna, spend most of their time in Florida these days. Reza developed Khatib Bridge Youth, a project the doctor still hopes to expand with additional promotion and financial support.

And as the snowbirds return to the Piper's Landing Yacht & Country Club in Palm City FL, Reza and other residents work to restart their own seasonal duplicate game, just as in previous years.

The club's manager, Harry Falk, a retired national tournament director,

offered high praise for Reza.

"Reza is one of the most generous men I've ever known," said Falk. "When we raised funds to buy our own building, we had a great deal of trouble finding a place. When we finally did, we were somewhat short of the funds we needed to close the deal. He stepped up with a major contribution to help make our dream a reality. In addition, he frequently makes donations when we have a special event scheduled at the club. And he made a major contribution to the club in memory of my mother.

"Reza is a very determined person. When he gets involved with a project, he dives headlong into it. This was especially true in his efforts to promote youth bridge. His efforts in fields outside of the bridge world are most impressive.

"Health concerns may limit opportunities for face-to-face play at the club these days, but Reza remains an active online virtual club player, and his presence is always felt."

Professional and community life

Reza's remarkable career reflects his lifelong commitments to medicine and to rendering community service to people of all faiths. As an internationally renowned neurosurgeon, his clinical accomplishments have been responsible for major breakthroughs in the diagnosis and treatment of brain cancers, aneurysms and skull-

based tumor surgery. In the spring of 2017, he received a Healthcare and Health Services Sage Award, an honor given by the Council on Aging of Martin County FL, to recognize seniors who continue to use their wisdom and talents to better the world around them.

Reza works tirelessly to bring people together. After the heartbreaking attacks of 9/11, Reza worked first with St. Joseph's College and more recently with the University of Mary Washington in Virginia, to maintain the Khatib Chair for Study of Comparative Religions and a spirit of philanthropy. "We don't get to choose the religious heritage we are born into, and we all need to get along," stated Reza. Encouraging understanding and mutual respect among those of all cultures and faiths has remained a central theme of Reza's life.

Reza remembers when he was only 10 years old, in Mashhad, Iran, a popular public official and security officer whom he admired sustained a head injury in the line of duty. He died within a few hours. The autopsy revealed an epidural hematoma, and



Georgianna and Reza Khatib. "Georgie" graduated from St. Joseph's College and was a teacher and later principal for the Manhattan School for the Language and Hearing Impaired in New York.



Georgie and Reza created the Mashhad Clinic and Learning Center in Iran, shown here with its staff and students (intentionally blurred). Their sponsorship continues to this day.

Reza learned that a neurosurgeon would have been able to save the man's life. It was at that moment, despite his tender age, that Reza decided to become a neurosurgeon.

From his first year of residency assisting surgeries, Reza was greatly saddened and professionally frustrated by the fate of patients suffering from glioblastoma multiforme (GBM), a particularly devastating form of brain cancer. Reza's primary cause has been the eradication of GBM, and he has remained extremely active during his later professional life, whether as practitioner or philanthropist.

Reza's impact on healthcare recently extended to Alzheimer's disease when Georgianna received an Alzheimer's diagnosis in 2015 and started medication. Reza was skeptical and arranged for consultations and further testing with Mount Sinai Medical Center. There, it was discovered that Georgie's diagnosis was not accurate. Impaired blood flow – rather than Alzheimer's – was the culprit, and a cardiac pacemaker the remedy. They were able to determine this through a specialized test called an amyloid PET (positron emission

tomography) scan, which can detect the presence of certain markers of Alzheimer's as well as provide information about blood flow and how your body is using oxygen and sugar.

Reza recognized that PET scanning would be prohibitively expensive for many patients and rarely covered by most medical insurance programs. With over 8 million Americans suffering from Alzheimer's, might a significant number of those patients also be misdiagnosed and mistreated for what amounted to purely financial reasons? Reza arranged for a pilot project to be instituted through the Kane Center and the University of Miami to conduct the required testing without charge. The study is not yet complete but seems to be revealing that a substantial minority of patients do, in fact, have PET scans that are normal, and are very possibly free of Alzheimer's. More results and analyses are needed – along with collaborative efforts to make a broader array of diagnostic methods available and affordable for suspected Alzheimer's patients and their families. 📍

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