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## Longtime physician helped start clinic



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5:25 AM

Dr. Carl L. Armstrong, 81, a Toledo obstetrician and gynecologist for more than 40 years who co-founded the area's first abortion clinic months after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the procedure legal, died Wednesday in Lake Park Rehabilitation Center, Sylvania.

Dr. Armstrong of Sylvania Township had kidney failure, said his wife, Vernelis, who is magistrate of U.S. District Court in Toledo.

He retired in 2003 from his ob-gyn practice. He also retired from Toledo Medical Services, successor to the Franklin Clinic, which he opened in late 1973 with Dr. A.H. Steinberg and Dr. Melvern Ayers.

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He began his Toledo ob-gyn practice in 1959 and, in 1989, was joined by his son Dr. Anthony Armstrong.

"It became very special for both of us," said his son, chief of staff of Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center. "We are quite a bit alike, in the way we approach life. We just sort of take it as it comes.



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physician, and the politics of medicine in Toledo. Dad had the answers all the time."

The elder Dr. Armstrong delivered thousands of babies through the decades.

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He'd been close to his mother, grandmother, and sisters and was "supportive of women achieving their best," his wife said. "He said he needed a specialty with positive outcomes, and ob-gyn was perfect for him."

In 1972, he received the Distinguished Service Award from the Planned Parenthood League of Toledo for volunteer services in its clinics dating to the early 1960s.

During his years running Toledo Medical Services, he kept his composure despite arsons and protesters.

"While delivering babies is an extremely joyous and gratifying experience, not all women want to have babies [or are] prepared to experience motherhood," his wife said. "If they want to delay motherhood, which is an awesome responsibility, he felt that was their choice."

He was born Aug. 26, 1928, in Pontiac, Mich., the son of Annie and Coy Armstrong.

He was in high school when his father's last illness inspired him to study medicine.

"He went to the hospital emergency room, and there was a long delay, and his father died," Dr. Armstrong's wife said. "That fired him: He didn't want to see anyone lying there untreated because of his color" - black.



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in Nashville, from which he received his medical degree. Afterward, he became a captain in the Army Medical Corps.

His first wife, Doris, and daughter, Pamela, died in 1971.

Surviving are his wife, Vernelis, whom he married July 23, 1972; sons, Karl, Dr. Anthony, and Gregory Armstrong and Michael Abney; stepson, Christian Maxwell; brothers, Leonard and Richard Armstrong, and sisters, Hazel Cobb, Geraldine Smith, Barbara Campbell, Valerie Irwin, and Sharon Holmes.

The family will receive friends from 3 to 8 p.m. tomorrow in the Dale-Riggs Funeral Home. Services will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at Third Baptist Church, where he was a member, with family visitation at 10 a.m.

The family suggests tributes to the Third Baptist Church scholarship fund; the Academy of Medicine of Toledo and Lucas County Foundation; the Toledo Museum of Art; Hospice of Northwest Ohio, or the American Cancer Society.

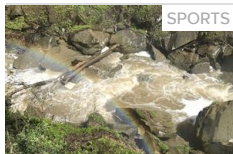
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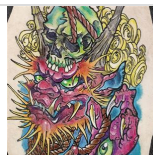
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