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# Longtime Gary doctor remembered as trailblazer, mentor

By CARRIE NAPOLEON

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Blanche and Dr. Clarence Boone listen to speakers in May 2018 at the dedication of a lecture hall in Boone's honor at the IU School of Medicine-Northwest in Gary. (Carole Carlson / Post-Tribune)

Dr. Clarence Boone, a trailblazer for African American and women's rights, died Oct. 31 after a short illness. He was 89.

Boone is remembered as an icon in the community and a mentor to those physicians who came after him.

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“He was one of the first African American physicians to run a practice in Gary,” said Dr. Roland Walker, a pediatrician and Gary’s director of public health.





Dr. Clarence Boone (Provided by Boone family / HANDOUT)

Boone graduated from Froebel High in Gary in 1949 and went on to attend Indiana University where he earned a degree in anatomy and physiology. He then made history as one of five black students enrolled at the Indiana University School of Medicine.

In May 2018 his alma mater celebrated his accomplishments by dedicating a lecture hall in Boone's name in the Dunes/Medical Professional Building at Indiana University Northwest in Gary, also home to the IU School of Medicine – Northwest.

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Besides the hundreds of babies he delivered, much of Boone's life was devoted to IU. He served on the Board of Trustees, and a stint as president of the IU Alumni Association. He received its Distinguished Alumni Service Award in 2003.

“I think he bleeds cream and crimson,” said Dr. Steve Simpson, a Gary physician said at the time of the dedication.

Even after Boone retired he continue to be a role model to people like him, Walker said.

As a young man, seeing what Boone was able to accomplish was an inspiration, he continued.

“He would always offer words of encouragement. He made it sound easy. ‘I did it, you can do it,’ he would say,” Walker said.

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He said he would see Boone attending services on Sundays at St. Timothy Church where he was a member for 55 years.

“He was a faithful member of St. Timothy. I got to see him there,” Walker said.

Dr. Brenda Thompson has been a pediatrician for 40 years in Northwest Indiana, first in Gary and now in Merrillville. She said Boone was a supportive figure who was instrumental in helping her goddaughter go to Indiana University Northwest.

“Now she’s a pediatrician,” Thomspon said.

She said Boone could have practiced anywhere but chose to remain in Gary and help an underserved community.

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“His main thing is he is just a great guy. He delivered all these babies in an area that is

poor,” Thompson said.

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Matt Doyle, Methodist Hospitals president and CEO, said Boone was an important figure in the success of Methodist Hospitals over many decades.

“His skill and wisdom helped bring needed care to the people of Gary and Northwest Indiana, and we are grateful for his leadership and service,” Doyle said.

“Many benefited from this wisdom and grace and we celebrate his life and the many contributions he made over his long career in medicine,” Doyle said.

Boone served as president of the medical staff and Methodist Hospitals and was chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Methodist Hospital Northlake. He was president of the Lake County Medical Society and the Lake County and National Medical association.

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He served as medical director for Planned Parenthood of Northwest Indiana and was a National Medical Committee Member of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. He held lifetime memberships in the NAACP and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.

“He was an icon in our community,” Walker said.

*Carrie Napoleon is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.*

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