

Adam Blatner, 1937-2021

Originally posted on October 2, 2021



Adam Blatner, M.D., “floated to the finish” (in his own words) in October. Inspired as a child by his primary physician’s kindness, Dr. Blatner declared his intention to become a doctor even before elementary school, saying “I want to help other little children, like you do.” Graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, where he was awarded Phi Beta Kappa in his Junior year, he continued his education at San Francisco University Medical School, receiving his M.D. and entering psychiatric residency at Stanford University School of Medicine. Following his residency,

Dr. Blatner joined the United States Air Force, served as head of the family clinical treatment facility at Lakenheath Air Force Base, and achieved the rank of Lt. Colonel. He was double board certified in adult and child/adolescent psychiatry and was a Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association.

Dr. Blatner’s sub-specialty interest led to his certification as a Trainer Educator of Psychodrama. He is the author of the primary textbook in that field, *Acting-In*, which has been translated into every major language. A prolific writer, he authored several other books, chapters in textbooks, and many articles.

He was an active proponent of psychological literacy, critical thinking, and mental flexibility. As a clinician, he helped patients discover areas of health and joy in their lives. Dr. Blatner wrote and taught about the primary values of imagination, intuition, playfulness, improvisation, physical vitality, expressiveness, and spiritual inspiration as ways to foster a higher level of social and emotional skills in the human population.

Teaching has been a constant focus of Dr. Blatner’s professional and avocational endeavors. He was an Associate Professor at the University of Louisville School of Medicine and Texas A&M Medical School. In retirement, he and several other teachers started a Senior Learning for fun program. A passionate reader and polymath from his early childhood, Dr. Blatner borrowed from local lending libraries and purchased thousands of books—reading them all! One of his greatest joys with the Senior Learning program was the chance to teach classes on a wide variety of subjects from Shakespeare, world writing systems, micro-biology, process philosophy, history of medicine, history of comic books, etc.

He was an outstanding dancer, embracing international folk and ballroom dance as a teenager, adding square and round dancing, and advanced his skill in those areas into his later life. During retirement, he sang in a choral group and participated in community theatre productions. Always a lover of the tradition of campfire song fests, he compiled an extensive songbook, and actively held small and larger group sing-a-longs wherever he lived.

After Dr. Blatner — a lifelong clinician, academic, theorist, internationally respected author and educator — learned that he was experiencing symptoms of dementia, he declared his intention to calmly “float to the finish.” Which he did, surrounded by his devoted family. He is survived by his wife of almost 50 years, Allee; ex-wife, Barbara; son David and wife Debbie, their sons Gabriel and Daniel; daughter Alisa and husband Paul, their daughters Camille and Zoe; brother Irwin, two beloved nieces, and numerous cousins. His uplifting smile and *joie de vivre* will be deeply missed by his family, colleagues, and friends. He often insisted that his greatest accomplishment was: “I got to help.”

The family thanks SLO Hospice and the “angels on earth” from Dignity Health Hospice who attended his final decline. Neptune Society was especially helpful when we needed them most. In lieu of flowers please consider donating to your local Library. The family held a private service to honor Adam’s life.