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Dr Donald King, 84, Radiologist Who Pioneered Medical Use of Ultrasound, Air Force Major

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Donald Latham King, age 84, former professor of radiology at the College of Physicians & Surgeons, Columbia University and 45-year resident of Darien, died peacefully on Dec. 31 at home with his family.

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He was the son of Alan Forrest King and Annabel Baldwin Latham King, born in Pasadena, California on Oct. 31, 1934. He was raised in San Marino, California and graduated from South Pasadena-San Marino High School in 1952.

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He graduated with a major in biology from Stanford University in 1956 and that same year entered the College of Physicians & Surgeons, Columbia University, graduating as a doctor of medicine in 1960.

Dr. King was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force in 1960. Following an internship at Walter Reed Army Hospital he undertook an Air Force sponsored civilian residency in radiology at Presbyterian Hospital in New York.

— an obituary from [Edward Lawrence Funeral Home](#)

He served for four years at the USAF Hospital in Evreux, France, and at the U.S. Air Force Academy Hospital. He separated from the USAF as major in 1968.

He returned to Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons and Presbyterian Hospital as assistant professor of radiology and assistant attending Radiologist.

In 1962, as a resident in radiology, Dr. King developed an enduring interest in the nascent field of diagnostic ultrasound imaging.

By 1964 Columbia University had purchased the first unit of the first successful commercially made diagnostic ultrasound imaging scanner manufactured in the United States. Years later he donated that imaging system to the medical instrument collection of the Smithsonian Institute.

While at Columbia University Dr. King concentrated on diagnostic ultrasound imaging, being the first there to offer it as a general clinical service.

In 1970, he developed electrocardiographic-gated ultrasonic imaging of the heart. This method subsequently evolved, under sponsorship of a grant from the National Science Foundation, into computer reconstruction of three-dimensional cardiac images using a three-dimensional sonic spatial locator for image spatial registration.

From these reconstructions three-dimensional volume measurements of the heart chambers were calculated and used to study cardiac physiology and disease.

In 1975, he edited “Diagnostic Ultrasound,” the first comprehensive textbook covering the field. He received two U.S. patents covering his three-dimensional imaging apparatus and method as well as several grants to pursue its development. In 1992 he received the Joseph H. Holmes Pioneer Award from the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine.

He authored or co-authored and published more than 200 scientific articles and abstracts over the course of his career. He also taught ultrasound imaging and echocardiography to hundreds of residents and fellows.

Of note, he conceived, described and validated a new, original volumetric index of left ventricular cardiac function known as the myocardial contraction fraction that is more predictive of patient outcome than

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conventional measures in patients with certain myocardial diseases and heart failure.

He was a fellow of the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine, the Society of Radiologists in Ultrasound, the American Society of Echocardiography and the American Heart Association.

Following retirement as emeritus professor of Radiology at Columbia University in October 2000, he pursued his hobby of genealogical research detailing his family history back to colonial Virginia, Massachusetts, England and Scotland.

He was a member of the Darien Men's Association, the Tokeneke Club and Wee Burn Country Club.

He is survived by Nancy Nicholas Mowlds King, his beloved wife of 59 years; three sons: Donald Latham Jr., Thomas Mackenzie, Benjamin Nicholas; and six grandchildren: Kyle, Henry, Caroline, Connor, Kalena and Dylan.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to the [American Cancer Society](#). A memorial service will be held at St Luke's Parish, Darien in the spring.