EULOGY ON THE DEATH OF DR. JOSEPH KALEEL DAVID, JR., DELIVERED AT SAINT JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH BY DR. EDNA SAFFYAT 11 A.M. ON AUGUST 7, 2002

We would believe the August sun shines brightly as before, yet this is not so. For those who loved this man, the light has dimmed, and the days are forever darkened by our loss. So we gather in this holy place for warmth from the diminished light. We gather for farewell to a fearless warrior, to a man who strode through the decades of his life, to a man who bore the standard by which all good is judged, to Dr. Joseph Kaleel David, Jr. -- J.K. to his friends, Dr. David to his colleagues, father to his children, and Beloved Yousef to his wife...
The world did not wait until the moment of his death to bring tribute to him. For long has this man been “raised high on the silken pillows” of praise by all who knew him. Only a few brief weeks ago at the Syrian Lebanese Convention, the table of Mary and J.K. was surrounded by friends waiting to be touched by him, to be spoken to by him, to be acknowledged by this great man. Wherever the two attended, they would be the center as all gathered to pay homage.

To the parents of the children he healed, he will always be our Dr. David; and many of those, no longer children, are with us today in this holy place because of the medical magic this great man performed. Always careful, always confident, relying not on the power of drugs but on the higher powers, the power of a mother’s touch, a father’s hand and a doctor’s caring, these children were nourished and thrived. Neither the children nor the parents have ever forgotten. Today, they return once more to say thank you, yet this time it is also to say farewell.
To his people of the world he was a warrior, a healing warrior, a brave warrior. Peace was his holy word, peace was his shield, the pen was his instrument. No more should sound the guns of war, but ring the bells of peace. He spoke for us all seeking an end to the tragedy in the Middle East, seeking life for all people, and an end to needless death. He was our hero; he was our warrior.

To his sisters and brothers, the daughters and sons of Najibah and Joseph Kaleel David, Sr., he was the heart of the family. From their home first in Springfield and then in Avondale, the circle of the family widened to encompass all. As Najibah would gracefully pour the demitasse cups of Turkish coffee and serve the delicate pastries to her guests, his sister, Beatrice, would play the piano, the family would share their lives with each other. Lucille and Gladys his sisters and Noble and Raymond, his brothers, speak often of those golden times and that unbroken circle.
To his own children, he was the beloved father. They were his greatest legacy. His soul shone forth through his eyes as he spoke of them. The pride and esteem in which he held them. Barbara, the one he called "the real doctor", a doctor of philosophy and university professor of music... Through her hands, she held the magic of healing as she played her music and as she taught. Richard too has his father's magic, and he with the help of God gives life to the newborn. J.K.'s dear Clifford remaining close as well here at Nemours Clinic, continuing the magic by the healing of children... These three, doctors all...the hands and the art of the father have become the legacy of the children.
To his wife he was love, for the love of a man for a woman could be no greater than J.K.'s love for Mary, his wife. Together for 30 years, yet too brief a time, too brief a moment. She was his shelter, she was his love, and she was his life. She is the woman who cleared the pathways of our world, so this warrior could tread them. On their journey of life, they held closely to each other with unfailing love and unfailing tenderness. One year ago, she brought him back from the darkness, for it is because of her that J.K. has been with us for this one last year. After his surgery, moment by moment, she guided him back along that dark passage to the light of one more year. The world calls this woman “Mary David”, but to J.K. she was his Beloved Maria. In secret places lay the words and poems of their love, always to be a treasure in her memory. He wrote to her of his love, of the passage of time, of their life together. Always were they poems of love. Always he dedicated these notes to Maria. Always he signed them “Yousef”.

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Yes, the sun has set upon that perfect circle. The sun has set upon that heroic life. And now we give back that which was ours for only a day, for only a brief moment. Yet for that moment our world gives thanks for time together. We say farewell to Dr. Joseph Kaleel David, Jr. We shall miss him so. We shall miss his touch. We shall miss his voice. We shall miss his days.

But oh for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still
The tender grace of a day that is gone
A day that return never will.

(The above four lines are a variation on Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem “Break Break Break”.)