

# Frederick C. LaBrecque, MD

1909 - 2003

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Frederick C. LaBrecque, MD, a pioneer in the field of obstetrics and gynecology in Waterbury, Connecticut was born on October 23, 1909 in Taunton, Massachusetts, to French-Canadian immigrants. During the Depression he worked his way through Boston College, graduating in 1931, and Tufts Medical School, graduating in 1935, supported by running paper routes, playing jazz piano, and soda jerking. He rode the train an hour-plus each way to Boston and met his lifelong partner, Alice Douglas, the lone bright spot in the daily commute.

Dr. LaBrecque came to Waterbury as a rotating intern at St. Mary's Hospital in 1935 and fell in love with the city. After a residency in ObGyn at Boston City Hospital and Massachusetts Memorial Hospital, he returned to live permanently in Waterbury. Except for two years proudly serving his country during World War II as Lt. Commander and Chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Shoemaker Naval Hospital in Pleasanton, California, he devoted the rest of his professional life to the women and babies of Waterbury.

In August 1939, Dr. LaBrecque opened his office above Pickett's Drug Store on West Main Street just west of the Green. He soon became the preferred consultant in women's health for the region. As the founder of St. Mary's Obstetrics and Gynecology Department, he trained a generation of nurses and staff. He also served and taught while on the attending staff at Waterbury Hospital. At various times, Dr. LaBrecque was Chief of Staff, Chief of Surgery, and Chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology at St. Mary's. He was president of the New England ObGyn Society and the Waterbury Medical Association and was a member of several state and national medical organizations.

For many years, Dr. LaBrecque won the *Republican-American's* "Baby Derby" as the physician delivering the most Waterbury babies in a given year. His highest annual total was more than 600, with his lifetime total more than 12,000 - an astonishing accomplishment for a solo practitioner! He retired from practice in 1981.

Dr. LaBrecque didn't limit his efforts to his profession, but gave much of his time to the Waterbury community. A member of St. Margaret Catholic Church for sixty-one years, he was founder and first president of the church's parish council, and served as a lay trustee for many years. He helped found the Pre-Cana marriage preparation movement in Connecticut and often spoke to area youth about understanding their changing bodies. He was a frequent speaker at Waterbury churches, schools and civic groups and addressed the state legislature about issues affecting the health of women and children. He was an active member of several community organizations including the Waterbury Rotary Club and the Country Club of Waterbury.

Devoted to his alma mater, Dr. LaBrecque served on Boston College's President's Council and Alumni Board. As an alumnus interviewer, he encouraged local youth in their pursuit



of higher education. In 1982, Boston College presented him the McKinney Award for outstanding alumni contributions. In 2003, the Frederick C. and Alice D. LaBrecque Annual Lecture in Medical Ethics was endowed at Boston College.

Despite his many titles, awards and accolades, Dr. LaBrecque was proudest of the recognition received from his patients. He delivered many second, and even some third generation babies. He served all women and families of Waterbury, regardless of race, religion or ability to pay. No patient was ever turned away, and his memory will live on for generations. He also believed strongly in the potential of young people to reach for a dream; that a poor child of immigrant parents could become a pioneering physician and a prominent member of his adopted community was a testament to that.

In his closing address as President of the Waterbury Medical Association, he chose for his topic "Faith as a Therapeutic Agent." The cornerstone of his practice of medicine was: Faith in God, faith in oneself and one's abilities, and the patients' faith in their physician.

With his beloved wife of fifty-seven years, Dr. LaBrecque proudly raised nine children in a splendid home on Columbia Boulevard. There he died on December 13, 2003.