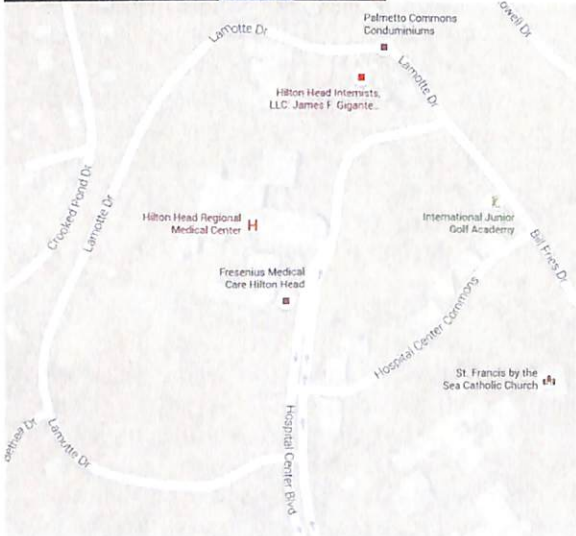


# LAMOTTE, PETER

(Aug 18, 1929-Dec 02, 2007)



Monday Dec 03, 2007 Island Packet

Dr. Peter LaMotte, who opened Hilton Head Island to America's retirees when he founded Hilton Head Hospital in 1975, died Sunday evening at Hospice House in Savannah. LaMotte, 78, died of complications following a fall outside his Bluffton home on the morning of Nov 15, 2007, said his wife, Beryl. "Sea Pines founder Charles Fraser said the things that helped Hilton Head evolve as a place that people would come to were mosquito control, air conditioning and the bridge," said Jim Chaffin, former Sea Pines vice president who was a young salesman when he introduced the LaMottes to the island. "For it to evolve long-term as a real human settlement, rather than a resort destination, it needed quality health care. That's what Peter provided."

At the time, LaMotte was 41 and at the peak of a lucrative career in New York City as chief of trauma surgery and chief of orthopedic surgery at Roosevelt Hospital. He had been the physician for the New York Mets baseball team since its inception, tending some of the most famous legs in the business with players like Willie Mays. Legendary manager Casey Stengel once gave him the team's MVP (Most Valuable Physician) award.

Hilton Head, on the other hand, had no glitter when the LaMottes got their first peek in the fall of 1970 -- a year after the "Amazing Mets" won the World Series. Peter and Beryl LaMotte, who was seven months pregnant, dropped in while en route to Florida to deliver a family boat to LaMotte's father, IBM executive vice president and board member Louis H. "Red" LaMotte Jr. Two days later, they owned property here. And two years later, they moved full-time to an island that was mostly woods. It had fewer than 3,000 residents, and two doctors working out

of a small clinic on Pope Avenue. Fraser asked LaMotte why he didn't open a hospital. The idea fell on fertile ground. Fraser introduced LaMotte to young attorney Bill Bethea at a cocktail party, and Bethea immediately bought into LaMotte's vision of a Mayo Clinic-style medical facility on the island. "Peter's vision and his drive and his skill and personality made it possible for us to be a better community and a more complete community by adding that component of quality health care that we lacked and needed," Bethea said.

Despite long odds -- involving a change in state law and a special Internal Revenue Service exemption to get nonprofit status, 14 committee meetings with the state health department, a \$1.2 million local fundraising campaign, finding someone to underwrite \$11.2 million in bonds, and then enticing enough people to buy the bonds -- a 40-bed hospital came to life in 1975. At the same time, a recession made it nearly impossible to keep the doors open. "Peter loved a challenge," Beryl LaMotte said. "Challenges and obstacles did not dampen his resolve," Bethea said.

Dr. Paul Long, the 13th doctor recruited by LaMotte to staff the hospital, said, "I think it is because of Peter's whole persona that it worked. He was so dynamic; it's hard to describe. He turned on the lights in the room, and he didn't go to the switch. We wanted to emulate him. It kept us going, even when things were bad."

Paula Harper Bethea, Bill's wife and current board chairman of the hospital's Tenet Corp.-owned successor, the Hilton Head Regional Medical Center, led several community fundraisers for the hospital, as bond holders were asked to be patient instead of being paid. "We had campaigns to pay the electric bill," she said. "But Peter LaMotte thought everything was possible. 'It's going to be fine, Billy,' he'd say, and look where we've come. Now we're one of the smallest hospitals in America, if not the smallest, doing open-heart surgery."

While the hospital is credited with helping underpin the real estate and service sectors of the economy by making countless retirees feel comfortable in moving here, it has other legacies: The Hilton Head Island Foundation was founded in 1994 with \$22 million from the hospital's sale. It is now part of the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, serving four counties. Its assets today are \$41 million, and it has distributed \$23 million in grants since its inception. The hospital is an economic engine, with 1,000 employees and an annual payroll of \$40 million. It has 180 doctors in its network, and paid \$4 million in taxes to Beaufort County and \$2 million to the Beaufort County School District last year. It gave the community a medical base beyond the hospital itself. It became an integral part of the community's social and civic fabric, with a 420-person auxiliary in place before the doors opened. It was immediately a center for volunteerism, and several of its primary fundraisers became social staples, including the Hospital Ball, the Hospital Bazaar and the annual Dr. Alligator golf tournament.

LaMotte's parents, Red and Lois LaMotte, followed him to the island, and were the largest single benefactors of the hospital. The LaMotte Building beside the hospital is named for them. His older brother, Louis H. "Reddy" LaMotte III, also moved to the island.

LaMotte practiced orthopedic surgery at the hospital until retiring in 1987. He subsequently became a partner with Chaffin, former Sea Pines vice president, and Jim Light in the Spring Island development in Beaufort County. The LaMottes had moved from Spring Island to the Belfair gated community in Bluffton earlier this year to be closer to the island hospital. When LaMotte finally stepped away from the hospital after it was sold in 1994, he said, "I've loved it, lived it and worked it 20 hours a day for the last 20 years." He said he had no regrets in turning his baby over to others. "Of course, I'm disappointed," he said. "It isn't going to be the same old thing, but nothing in life is. My worst disappointment would be if the hospital failed and we had to close it." He acknowledged that when he came to the island, "the idea of a hospital on Hilton Head Island didn't make much sense. We began to think about it and work about it. It took a lot of doing."

LaMotte was born in New York City and was a rambunctious, fun-loving youth. "He actually flew a biplane -- a Stearman -- as a teenager," Bill Bethea said. "He was an adventuresome sort." He recovered from polio as a youth and heart troubles as an adult. He was a low-handicap golfer, with Winged Foot, Harbour Town and the Old Tabby course at Spring Island his favorites. He was known for whistling as he walked the fairways, but being a dogged competitor. LaMotte attended Landon School in Washington, DC, and Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. He graduated from George Washington University Medical School. He did his internship and residency at Roosevelt Hospital and his orthopedic training at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, then returned to Roosevelt Hospital.

LaMotte is survived by his wife of 38 years, Beryl, and five children, Claudia Hull of New Hampshire, Nicole LaMotte of North Carolina, Kimberlee LaMotte-Tovar (Carlos) of Bluffton, Michelle Lawton (Ned) of San Francisco, Peter LaMotte of Washington, D.C.; seven grandchildren; three siblings, Louis H. LaMotte (Anne) of Hilton Head, Noel Adams (David) of Saucon Valley, PA, and Thomas J. LaMotte (Ursula) of Bedford, NY.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the LaMotte Fund at the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, Hilton Head Island, SC. Island Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Services will be held later this week at St. Francis By the Sea Catholic Church on Beach City Road, the family said.

Saturday afternoon was beach worthy on Hilton Head Island, but the evening came with a welcome winter's chill. That chill came in the form of the winter wonderland theme at the 2008 Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Chamber Ball at The Westin Hilton Head Island Resort & Spa. About 700 people attended the event. The theme was driven home when a coat-clad Bill Miles, president and CEO of the chamber, rode into the ballroom on a four-wheel ATV laden with skiing gear. Things warmed up with the announcement of awards. The most emotional moment of the evening came with the award presented to the late Dr. Peter LaMotte, who was honored posthumously with the 2007 Alice Glenn Doughtie Good Citizenship Award for selfless service to the community. LaMotte, who passed away in December, worked diligently to create Hilton Head Hospital and then helped it succeed. He was honored for his work as founder of the hospital. "He built the hospital because he loved Hilton Head, and he built the hospital because he loved his profession," his widow, Beryl LaMotte, said as she fought back tears. The hospital was purchased by Tenet Healthcare Corp. in 1994. Some \$22 million from the sale was used to set up what is now the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry. "He would inspire and motivate people to do things they didn't think they could accomplish," said Bill Bethea, a long-time friend of LaMotte, in a video tribute at the ball.



# Louis Howell LaMotte Jr

**BIRTH** 29 MAR 1896 • Westminster, Carroll, Maryland

**DEATH** Unknown

## Facts

### Age 0 — Birth

29 Mar 1896 • Westminster, Carroll, Maryland

### Age 21 — Residence

23 May 1917 • New York City, New York

### Age 21 — Residence

1917-1918 • Manhattan, New York, New York

### Age 21 — Departure

27 Mar 1918 • Liverpool, England

### Age 22 — Arrival

05 Apr 1918 • New York, New York

### Age 24 — Residence

1920 • Manhattan Assembly District 13, New York, New York, USA

Marital Status: Single; Relationship: Son

### Age 25 — Birth of Son Louis Howell "Reddy" LaMotte III (1921-2012)

25 Dec 1921 • East Orange, Essex, New Jersey

### Age 33 — Birth of Son Peter LaMotte (1929-2007)

18 Aug 1929 • New York City, New York, New York

### Age 34 — Residence

1930 • Manhattan, New York, New York, USA

Marital Status: Married; Relation to Head of House: Head

### Age 35 — Birth of Child Noel LaMotte (1932-)

abt 1932 • Connecticut

### Age 39 — Residence

1935 • Darien, Fairfield, Connecticut

### Age 40 — Residence

1936 • Darien; Noroton; Noroton Heights; New Canaan, Connecticut, USA

### Age 44 — Residence

1 Apr 1940 • Montgomery, Maryland, USA

Marital Status: Married; Relation to Head of House: Head

### Age 46 — Residence

1942 • Montgomery, Maryland, USA

### Age 111 — Death of Son Peter LaMotte (1929-2007)

02 Dec 2007 • Savannah, Chatham, Georgia

### Age 116 — Death of Son Louis Howell "Reddy" LaMotte III (1921-2012)

12 Jun 2012 • Hilton Head Island, Beaufort, South Carolina

## Family

### Parents

Louis Howell LaMotte 1870-

Mary A LaMotte 1877-

### Spouse & Children

Lois Grubelman 1901-

Louis Howell "Reddy" LaMotte III 1921-2012

Peter LaMotte 1929-2007

Noel LaMotte 1932-

## Sources

### Ancestry Sources

1920 United States Federal Census

1930 United States Federal Census

1940 United States Federal Census

Ancestry Family Trees

New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957

U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995

U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925

U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918

U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942