

Steven Baron, 57, dies; ex-president of Miriam, crafted Lifespan network

MIDDLETOWN — Steven D. Baron, 57, an architect of the Lifespan hospital network and former president of Miriam Hospital, died yesterday in the intensive-care unit of the Providence hospital he had led for 11 years.

He was the husband of Sharon (Fransson) Baron.

Mr. Baron's death was not unexpected because he had been ill for a year, but it was a tragic twist of fate that led him to die at Miriam, where he had devoted nearly two decades of his career.

Mr. Baron, who worked in Pennsylvania, had returned to Rhode Island for the funeral of his mother-in-law, Shirley Fransson, who died when her car hit a tree in Middletown on Nov. 4. He became ill and was admitted Monday to the hospital, said Dr. Kathleen C. Hittner, Miriam president.

In late 1993, Mr. Baron, along with Rhode Island Hospital President Bill Kreykes, stunned the health-care community when they announced that Rhode Island and Miriam would put aside their longstanding rivalry to merge into what they envisioned as a multipurpose health-care network. "We need to bring ourselves together with other institutions," Mr. Baron said at the time. "We could only go so far as Miriam alone."

The result was Lifespan, the state's first and largest hospital group, and a significant change in the state's fractious health-care environment, as other hospitals also began negotiating mergers and affiliations.

Hittner said in a tearful interview yesterday that Mr. Baron would be most remembered for his emphasis on the quality of care at Miriam. "He really kept all of us focused on the



quality of medical care. When I'm walking around, I see his fingerprints on all the different services and programs we have," said Hittner, a Miriam anesthesiologist for many years. "He set this hospital up to be a real gem in the community, and we try to keep it that way."

As an administrator, Hittner said, Mr. Baron was "easy to talk to" and responded quickly and honestly to issues she raised. "We knew where he was coming from. There wasn't a hidden agenda."

Hittner described Mr. Baron as personable and funny, able to "fit in with the crowd" wherever he went, including the parties she threw for the anesthesiology department, where he loved the lamb chops she traditionally served.

"He was funny, he had a great sense of humor, and he was well-read. He could talk about any topic," she said.

Mr. Baron, who maintained a residence at Corey Lane, Middletown, and also lived in Hummelstown, Pa., was planning to come back to Rhode Island to work at the Miriam, helping with community relations in the Summit neighborhood, Hittner said.

Born in Plainfield, N.J., Mr. Baron earned a bachelor's degree at Rutgers and a master's degree in business administration at George Washington University. He started his career in health-care administration at Newton-Wellesley Hospital, in Newton, Mass., rising to the rank of associate executive director. In 1982, he joined Miriam Hospital as executive vice president, and became president and chief executive officer in 1988.

After the formation of Lifespan, he was put in charge of all its Rhode Island hospitals. In April 1999, several months after Kreykes resigned as Lifespan president amid the system's deepening financial troubles, Mr. Baron also left the hospital group. In

2000, he took a position as executive director and chief operating officer of the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center of Pennsylvania State University.

Rabbi James Rosenberg, of Temple Habonim, Barrington, where Mr. Baron had served as president of the congregation from 1988 to 1990, said Mr. Baron was diagnosed with lymphoma about a year ago. "He was a profile in courage," Rabbi Rosenberg said. "He continued to affirm life right up to the end." That included going — in a wheelchair — to see the World Series at Yankee Stadium.

Rabbi Rosenberg said Mr. Baron was an accomplished athlete who competed in a triathlon every year.

During his years in Rhode Island, Mr. Baron served as a trustee or chairman of many groups, including: Health Education and Leaders for Providence (HELP), United Way, the Hospital Association of Rhode Island, the American Heart Association's Heart Walk, and the Governor's Advisory Council on Health.

Mr. Baron was also a member of the Black/Jewish Forum Steering Committee, and a member of the board of directors of the Interfaith Health Care Ministries in Providence.

He loved his dog, Max.

He was a son of Hilda (Hess) Baron of Monroe Township, N.J., and the late Dr. Leo E. Baron, and had lived in Barrington for 22 years before moving to Middletown 6 years ago.

Besides his wife and mother, he leaves twin daughters, Meredith and Jessica Baron, both of Havertown, Pa.; two sisters, Bonnie Baron Shrager of Green Brook, N.J., and Susan Lippitt of Watchung, N.J.; and several nieces and nephews.

The funeral service will be held today at 12:30 p.m. in Temple Habonim, 165 New Meadow Rd., Barrington. Burial will be in Forest Chapel Cemetery, Barrington.

BARON, Steven D.

November 13, 2003. Residence, Corey Lane, Middletown. Beloved husband of Sharon (Fransson) Baron. Devoted son of Hilda (Hess) Baron of Monroe Township, N.J. and the late Dr. Leo E. Baron. Loving father of twin daughters Meredith and Jessica Baron both of Havertown, Pa. Dear brother of Bonnie Baron Shrager of Green Brook, N.J. and Susan Lippitt of Watchung, N.J. Cherished uncle of several nieces and nephews. Funeral service Friday 12:30 p.m. in TEMPLE HABONIM, 165 New Meadow Road, Barrington. In lieu of flowers, contributions in his memory may be made to the Steven and Sharon Baron Professorship in Surgery, c/o University Development A-120 Penn State Hershey Medical Center, P.O. Box 852, Hershey, PA 17033-0852 or The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Shiva will be observed at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Edward M. Schottland, 3 Stratford Road, Barrington, Saturday 6-8, Sunday 2-6 p.m. Arrangements by SHALOM MEMORIAL CHAPEL, 1100 New London Ave., Cranston.



Steven D. Baron

Health Care Leader

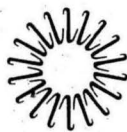
President and CEO of The Miriam Hospital 1988-1999

President and CEO of Rhode Island Hospital and

Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer of Lifespan 1995-1999

*Our heartfelt thanks for his many contributions
to the health care system of Rhode Island.*

*Our sympathy to the Baron family on the loss
of a much beloved man.*



Lifespan

Rhode Island Hospital/Hasbro Children's Hospital • The Miriam Hospital
Bradley Hospital • Newport Hospital

Obituary

Former head of Miriam Hospital, Steven D. Baron, 57, dies

PROVIDENCE — Steven D. Baron, 57, former president and chief executive officer of



Steven D. Baron

The Miriam Hospital, died on Thursday, Nov. 13, at the hospital, surrounded by his immediate family. Mr. Baron had been battling lymphoma, a form of cancer, for several years.

A loving and devoted husband and father, he leaves his wife, Sharon (Fransson) Baron and twin daughters, Meredith and Jessica Baron. The family resided in Barrington until sev-

eral years ago, and maintained a residence in Middletown.

A service of remembrance was held Thursday in the Miriam lobby. At the memorial, Kathleen C. Hittner, current president of the hospital, distributed pins that showed a clock with no hands. The pin was designed to reflect Mr. Baron's signature sign-off on his e-mail: "Is there anything I can do for you? I have the time."

"Steve lived his life with that motto in mind," Dr. Hittner said. "He always had the time for patients, family, hospital staff and fellow administrators. He always had an open-door policy and really did have that door open and the time for anyone who needed him."

She said he was a beloved member of the Miriam family and was a true visionary whose involvement in the creation of Lifespan has benefited the health and well-being of many Rhode Islanders.

Mr. Baron joined The Miriam Hospital in 1982 and served as its president and chief executive officer beginning in 1988. He was a primary designer of Lifespan, managing the initial merger of Rhode Island Hospital and The Miriam Hospital, in late 1993. He served as the executive vice president and chief operating officer of Lifespan and president of Rhode Island Hospital and The Miriam Hospital until 1999.

In 2000, he took a position at Temple Habonim in Bar-

ington and served as its president from 1988 to 1990. At the funeral held there on Friday, Nov. 14, Rabbi Jim Rosenberg called him a "profile in courage. He continued to affirm life right up to the end. That included going to see the World Series at Yankee Stadium a few weeks ago in a wheelchair."

Dr. Joseph Amaral, president and chief executive officer of Rhode Island Hospital, said, "Words cannot express the emptiness felt by Rhode Island Hospital and its board of trustees on the untimely passing of Steve Baron. Through his leadership role at Lifespan, he touched all of us in such a positive manner. So much of what we are today is directly attributed to Steve's commitment and efforts. He will be sadly missed by all."

Mr. Baron was a congregant

at Temple Habonim in Barrington and served as its president from 1988 to 1990. At the funeral held there on Friday, Nov. 14, Rabbi Jim Rosenberg called him a "profile in courage. He continued to affirm life right up to the end. That included going to see the World Series at Yankee Stadium a few weeks ago in a wheelchair."

He also was a pallbearer the week before, at his mother-in-law's funeral. She died in a car accident Nov. 4. "Steve spoke to me and asked my thoughts on how he could help Sharon and her family through this," the rabbi said. "When I started to talk about his own health, he cut me off. His concern was for them."

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Baron, 57, dies

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Mr. Baron served on the boards of the Health and Education Leadership for Providence (HELP), the United Way, the Hospital Association of Rhode Island, and the Governor's Advisory Council on Health.

Born in Plainfield, N.J., Mr. Baron earned a bachelor's degree at Rutgers and a master's degree in business administration at George Washington University. He started his career in health-care administration at Newton-Wellesley Hospital, in Newton, Mass., rising to the rank of associate executive director.

In addition to his wife and daughters, he is survived by his mother, Hilda (Hess) Baron of Monroe Township, N.J. He was the son of the late Dr. Leo E. Baron. He was also the brother of Bonnie Baron Shrager of Green Brook, N.J., and Susan Lippitt of Watchung, N.J., and will be missed by several nieces and nephews.

Burial was in Forest Chapel Cemetery in Barrington.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in his memory may be made to the Steven and Sharon Baron Professorship in Surgery, c/o University Development, A120, Penn State Hershey Medical Center, P.O. Box 852, Hershey, PA 17033-0852.