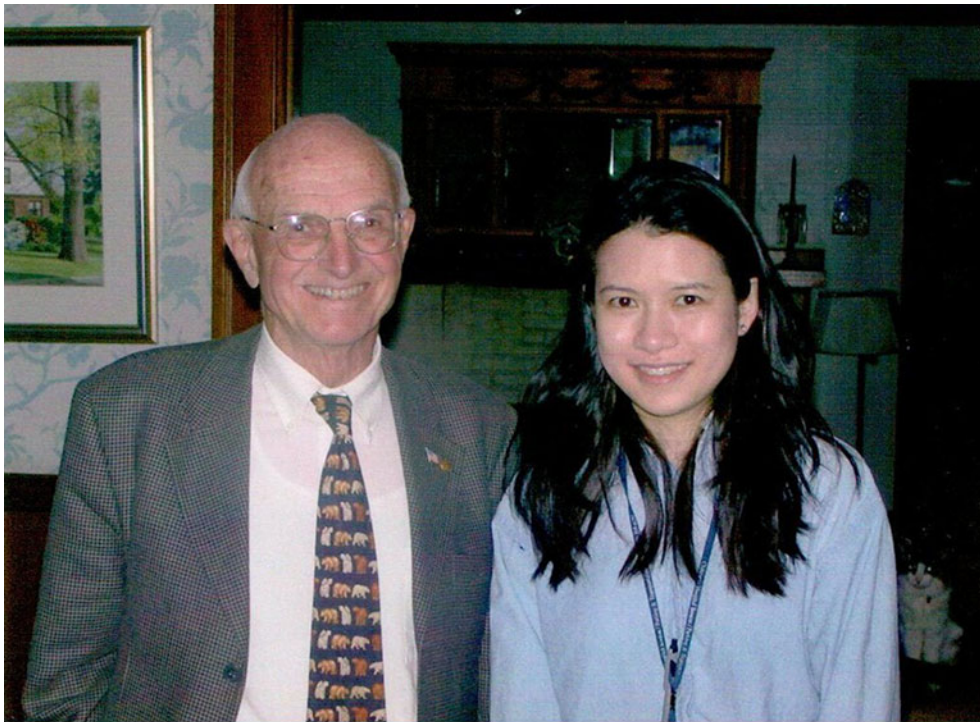


OBITUARY

Obituary: Dr. Joseph Murray

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Visiting Dr. Murray at his home (Photo courtesy of John Mulliken)

Dr. Joseph Murray passed away 28 November 2012 after a stroke. Dr. Murray made history when he performed the world's first successful kidney transplant on 23 December 1954 at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital (now Brigham

and Women's Hospital). He received the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology in 1990 for this accomplishment. This was only one of the many achievements—albeit the best-known one—accomplished by Dr. Murray in his professional life.

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Dr. Murray's interest in organ transplantation was originally inspired by the need for skin coverage in the treatment of burned soldiers at Valley Forge during World War II. His legacy in plastic surgery lives on in the success

of composite tissue allotransplantation (including skin), which did not become a clinical reality until the 21st century.

Less known is how Dr. Murray built the plastic and oral surgery program at Harvard. As the chief of plastic surgery, he hired young faculty—first John Mulliken and Lenny Kaban, then Joe Upton later—and mentored their development. As the whole plastic surgery community knows, all three surgeons became giants in our field and have greatly contributed to craniofacial/oral-maxillofacial surgery and hand/microsurgery. As young faculty, these men were encouraged by Dr. Murray to concentrate on areas not well understood in plastic surgery and thus were ripe for further investigation and research.

The most obvious example was Dr. Murray's advice to John Mulliken to study "hemangiomas." This led to the field of vascular anomalies, and Dr. Mulliken currently is considered a leading authority on this subject.

I remember the day I interviewed at Children's Hospital Boston and was taken to a Vascular Anomalies Conference. It was my first exposure to the wide spectrum of vascular lesions that continue to fascinate me. Although mentored by Dr. Mulliken, I was indirectly inspired by Dr. Murray.

I met Dr. Murray several times during my fellowship training at Boston Children's Hospital. He was retired at the time but occasionally attended conferences. Dr. Mulliken brought me to visit him at his home one time. Dr. Murray was incredibly interested in what the "young people" were doing and never lost his intellectual curiosity in the field.

In 1966, Dr. Murray performed the first midfacial advancement in the United States. Soon thereafter, he learned that Dr. Tessier was well advanced in craniofacial procedures. Dr. Murray recognized that the most effective method for developing the craniofacial program at Children's Hospital was to invite Dr. Tessier to Boston in the 1970 s. Dr. Mulliken and Dr. Kaban always enjoyed

Dr. Tessier's annual summer visits. Instead of fostering a competitive environment, Dr. Murray encouraged collaboration and learning from the leaders in the field to improve the care of patients. The father of craniofacial surgery's visiting professorship lasted 12 years.

Dr. Murray understood the importance of teamwork in the care of patients. He learned this concept during the early days in the development of the Craniofacial Centre at Boston Children's Hospital. Drs. Mulliken and Kaban worked together in the clinic and operating room. This culture of collaboration between plastic surgery and oral surgery continues to this day at Boston Children's Hospital.

Dr. Murray will always be remembered by those who worked with him as a humanistic, caring physician [1]. In his autobiography, *Surgery of the Soul*, Dr. Murray recounts story after story of his courageous patients. Surgical treatment often was rudimentary and experimental (by current standards). Nonetheless, his patients bravely underwent major craniofacial reconstruction, and despite their adversities, they went on to lead fruitful lives. Dr. Murray was inspired by his patients, and seemed to be in awe of them. He continued to follow their lives long after surgical treatment was completed [2]. Driven by his own intellectual curiosity to improve the discipline of plastic surgery, he never forgot that he was treating people, not pathologies.

Medical history will always credit Dr. Murray as the father of organ transplantation. His residents, fellows, and associates will never forget how he fostered an environment of continual learning, intellectual stimulation, and humanistic care of patients.

References

1. Personal recollections of Dr. John Mulliken
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