



## Heroes and Legends in Surgical Oncology Series: Legacies and Lessons

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In the ever-evolving landscape of surgery, where advancements occur at an astonishing pace, it is crucial to remember and honor the contributions of those who have been instrumental in the development and advancement of the specialty of surgical oncology.<sup>1</sup> These pioneers shaped the field into what it is today and have left an enduring imprint. Their surgical expertise has made an inestimable difference in the lives of countless patients, their innovative research has resulted in advancements in the field, and their commitment to education and mentorship has resulted in the dissemination of their collective wisdom and expertise across new generations of surgeons.<sup>2,3</sup> In this series, we strive to preserve the legacies of the founders and leaders in the field of surgical oncology and to highlight the enduring influence that they have had on the field of surgical oncology. The first two episodes of this new series, in which Dr. Kelly Hunt interviews Dr. Charles Balch, and Dr. Mitchell Posner interviews Dr. Murray Brennan, exemplify the best of both our field's legacies and lessons for the present.<sup>4,5</sup>

The specialty of surgical oncology has advanced significantly over time. However, without the persistent effort and creativity of our surgical oncology mentors, the specialty as we know it would not exist.<sup>6–8</sup> These surgical leaders were innovators of new surgical procedures and techniques, and they pushed the envelope of what was thought possible. They were the surgeon-scientists who developed and tested new diagnostic and therapeutic modalities through their commitment to laboratory science and clinical trials.

They were the leaders in developing multidisciplinary care for cancer patients and driving advancements in adjuvant therapy and neoadjuvant therapy. Through their commitment to excellence, scientific rigor, persistence, and intellectual curiosity, they helped make continuous progress in cancer patient care. Perhaps most significantly, these iconic individuals have inspired, motivated, and educated the following generations of surgeons to follow in their footsteps.

These surgical oncology heroes and legends also exemplified the principles of compassion, ethics, and patient-centered care. They had a profound impact on the lives of their patients, colleagues, and trainees lives that extended far beyond the operating room. Their experiences serve as a reminder that surgical oncology is not just a technical field but also a noble endeavor with the goal of reducing patient suffering and extending life.

We must never forget the giants on whose shoulders we stand. The field of surgical oncology is built upon the strong foundation established by these heroes and legends. These are the role models who we have all tried to emulate. We only regret that we did not initiate this series sooner, because some of the founders of surgical oncology are no longer with us or are no longer able to be interviewed.

Let us take a moment to acknowledge the multiplier effect of these heroes and legends. Their mentorship and training of others has influenced the advances in cancer surgery and multidisciplinary care worldwide. Their contributions have changed the profession, and the surgeons who will follow have benefited from their guidance. Through the patients they have helped, the surgeons they have trained, and the advancements they have sparked, their legacy endures. By honoring their contributions and accomplishments, we hope to inspire the next generations of surgical oncologists to follow in their footsteps.

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