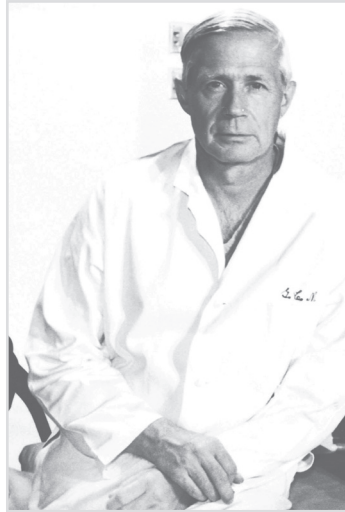


GEORGE COOPER MORRIS JR., M.D. 1924-1996

William L. Winters Jr., M.D.



In keeping with the commitment of this *Journal* to recognize and remember those from The Methodist Hospital cardiovascular medical staff who departed prior to the *Journal's* first publication, the following pays homage to George Cooper Morris Jr., M.D.

George Morris became the first surgical resident at Baylor College of Medicine under Dr. Michael E. DeBakey in 1950. He subsequently enjoyed a stellar career in Houston's Texas Medical Center, a career devoted primarily to the surgical treatment of peripheral vascular disease and coronary artery disease. During his career, he served on the medical staffs of Hermann Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, The Houston VA Hospital, Ben Taub City County Hospital, and his home base, The Methodist Hospital.

His undergraduate education took place first at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia followed by 2 more years at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, where he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1944. Next came medical school at The University of Pennsylvania, where he held the rank of lieutenant in the U.S. Naval Reserve. After a 1-year internship followed by a 1-year surgical pathology residency, he returned to Houston in 1950 to join Baylor's newly started surgical residency program. By the time he died in 1996, he had become an emeritus professor of surgery at Baylor College of Medicine.

When I arrived in Houston in 1968, Dr. Morris had recently been promoted to professor of surgery. My colleagues, Drs. Don W. Chapman, H. Liston Beazley, and Paul K. Peterson, were working closely with him. So I, too, came to know him well. This time period was the opening bell for a tsunami of patients being referred to The Methodist Hospital for coronary artery bypass surgery, which suited him well as he devoted his early years to innovative surgical approaches to peripheral vascular disease, dissecting aneurysms, renal vascular hypertension, and a modified sympathectomy for hypertension. He was a pioneer in our understanding of arterial medial hyperplasia, especially of the carotid and renal arteries, and he was the first to restore renal function by opening totally occluded renal arteries in patients with renal failure.

Dr. Morris was a teacher of the first rank for students, residents, fellows, and even for those in practice. His attention to detail in the pursuit of excellence — a DeBakey mandate — was the hallmark of his career. Despite an enormous clinical practice, he was equally dedicated to an academic career of research and publication — endeavors he encouraged in all his colleagues. He lectured worldwide and published extensively in all the major cardiovascular journals — in fact, more than 300 publications in journals, books, and videos.

Despite the pressures of his clinical and scientific work, he was generous in the time he spent with his cardiology colleagues reviewing cine films, case records, and postoperative reports. He was scrupulous in his follow-up of patients, which allowed him to compile extensive outcome reports over many years.

When time permitted, I enjoyed watching him operate on some of the more complex cardiovascular problems he encountered. His operating room language was often colorful, resulting at one time in a long list of "Morris-isms" tabulated by the OR staff.

He had a delightful family, presided over by his wife Jean, four daughters, one son (George Cooper Morris, III), and numerous grandchildren. He was generous with his friends, sharing time with them at his Lazy M Ranch along the Trinity River near Shepard, Texas, and at vacation homes at Lake Travis and Snowmass, Colorado. He ultimately succumbed to the ravages of smoking the infamous Picayune cigarette. My father (also a cardiologist) called cigarettes "coffin nails" — an appropriate name indeed.

Dr. Morris taught us cardiologists many things about commitment and integrity, love for our profession, and adherence to the principles of excellence. He was a fine man, a devoted father and husband, and a superb surgeon beloved by many of his patients. Sixteen years after his passing, his name still brings smiles to the faces of many of us.