



A Miracle and a Privilege

RECOUNTING A HALF CENTURY OF SURGICAL ADVANCE

BY FRANCIS D. MOORE

Joseph Henry Press, Washington, DC, 1995
\$29.95

REVIEWED BY JAMES J. FERGUSON JR

Francis Moore arrived on the threshold of medicine at the right time and place for expressing his many skills. In the mid-forties, fundamental science, much derived from wartime experiences, was beginning to affect clinical medicine in meaningful ways. Influenced by his own curiosity and that of visionary mentors at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, Moore was equipped by intellect and motivation to enlist in the revolution in surgery that occurred in the latter half of the century. He has played a major role in this revolution: participating, innovating, leading, teaching, encouraging, and giving counsel. Gladly, he has written this book, which perceptively recounts prominent events in his profession, as seen from that upper right-hand corner of the USA which is Boston. Is the book provincial? Of course it is, but that is part of its attraction. This effort catches much of the contagious excitement of the times, and with consummate grace, describes the participation of the author, his mentors, his colleagues, his students, and even his professional competitors.

As was the case with so many eminent Boston physicians, Moore came from the Midwest. His 1939 Harvard Medical School class of 120 contained 18 students who

would become professors of surgery. It was his good fortune to take a surgical residency at the Massachusetts General Hospital. There a concatenation of stars of the period (Edward Churchill, Oliver Cope, Fuller Albright, Richard Sweet, James Means, Joseph Aub, and others) imparted their influence on his thinking. On completing the residency, he briefly partnered a general surgical practice with Leland McKittrick, another MGH mentor. His 'call' to be Surgeon-in-Chief of the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital came in 1948 when he was 34, just nine years after graduation from Medical School. He followed in the shadows of Cutler and Cushing, and quickly moved to build an academic department in his own image.

Moore uses the wonderfully descriptive term 'surgical biologist' in referring to himself. He was absolutely visionary when, in 1941 in the second year of his residency, he elected to spend a fellowship year with Joseph Aub studying the use of isotopic methods in medicine. He subsequently pioneered in the application of such methods to clinical problems. His role in handling victims of the catastrophic Cocoanut Grove fire in 1942 led to research on lung injury in burns. He recognized the contributions to be made by the fundamental sciences, somewhat, but not totally, independent of the need for manual skills. He participated in the redefinition of surgery, escaping a tradition where 'skin to skin' speed of operations was a prime metric of the skilled surgeon. His approach carefully constructed the environment for progress, which allowed him and his colleagues to implement change. The direction of his work and that of his academic colleagues indicated a recognition of where the big solutions could be found. As a result, both the art and science of medicine have profited.

Woven through the book are his reflections on a number of provocative issues which are as timely today as when Dr. Moore confronted them. His dissection of the ethical issues related to gestation (e.g., abortion) and death (e.g., physician participation) are thoughtful and to this reviewer quite logical. He early favoured use of simple mastectomy rather than the radical operation introduced in the last century by Halsted, but seems reluctant to accept 'lumpectomy'. His somewhat sweeping criticism of the molecular orientation of some 'academic' physicians should be challenged, but can't be ignored. He thoughtfully reflects on the difficulty in choosing between clinical practice and research, a difficult choice for some of today's young physicians. Dr. Moore endorses the 'need to act' as a part of

the surgeon's ethic. One could reasonably question the constraint required to keep this need in balance, considering the immensity of the mischief possible if the need is discharged without reservation. Perhaps Dr. Moore's concern targets more the need for action when it is weighed against the comparable mischief of clinical paralysis. Here there is no dispute. The productive careers of Dr. Moore and his colleagues give sure testimony to the societal worth of pioneers — as long as they are as introspective and methodical as he in their 'need to act'.

Dr. Moore's professional horizons are indeed broad. His seminal contributions (he might disagree) concerned the use of isotopic tracers to measure body composition and body compartments. His surgical colleagues might forgive his foray into papers on tularemia (1943) and thyrotoxicosis (1946). He has provided welcome perspectives in his many publications on metabolism in surgery, body composition, tissue transplantation, breast cancer, and post-traumatic pulmonary insufficiency. He has not neglected prominent ethical and social issues.

Citing organ transplantation as the centerpiece of 20th century surgery, Dr. Moore knowingly recounts events leading up to this milestone, since many occurred during his time at Brigham Hospital. His review of the development of renal transplantation, starting with the desperate 'arm kidney operation' by Hufnagel and Hume in 1946, is revealing. Failures outnumbered successes until the development of the first immunosuppressive drugs in 1958. Liver transplantation (by Moore in 1963) followed, and the rest is history on a worldwide stage.

He describes in some detail the promising accomplishments of Brigham alumnus Steven Rosenberg in the manipulation of genetic and immunological defense mechanisms in the non-surgical treatment of cancer. In doing so, Dr. Moore may once again be prescient, showing his readiness to move on from today's accepted surgical norms into the wondrous world of the 21st century.

Can one so deeply immersed in a field judge the magnitude of his own role by means of an autobiography? The answer, of course, is no, and Francis Moore avoids such folly. His book should be looked upon not as an autobiography, but rather as a reminiscence with a more limited scope. Moore's book provides an engaging personal view of a most exciting time in a most exciting place, by a major contributor to surgical advances.

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