MICHAEL ELLIS DEBAKEY, M.D.
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Dr. Michael E. DeBakey couched the lives of all who were associated with him and of councless ochers who beneficed from his labors. He was a world-renowned surgeon, educator, scholar, researcher, inventor, innovator, leader, soldier, statesman, humanitarian, philanthropist, and sage - with a lifetime of accomplishments so broad and deep as to be almost inconceivable.

His medical inventions began early. While a medical student at Tulane Universicy in New Orleans, he invented the roller pump for use in blood transfusions. It later became an indispensable component of the heart-lung machine chat launched open-heart surgery.

In 1942, he enlisted in the Army and was assigned to the Office of the Surgeon General. Throughout World War II and early thereafter, he helped establish Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals (MASH), a regiscry for war injuries, che Veterans Administration Hospital, and che National Library of Medicine. When he was eligible for discharge at the end of the war, he volunteered for another year to complete several projects.

Dr. DeBakey returned co New Orleans after his discharge from the Army and rejoined the facul$_{ty}$ in Dr. Alton Ochsner's Department of Surgery at Tulane Medical School. In 1948, Dr. Ochsner encouraged Dr. DeBakey to accept an offer to become chairman of the Deparcment of Surgery at Baylor University College of Medicine, in Houston's newly formed Texas Medical Center. Dr. DeBakey accepted the appointment but came close to resigning after a disappointing start.

Figure 1. Mr. H. Ben Taub and Dr. Michael Blis DeBakey

Figure 2. The Methodist Hospital, 1951

Ar the time, Baylor had no residents, no full-rime faculty, and no reaching hospital. Through the efforts and cooperation of Mr. Ben Taub, (Figure 1), he was able to enlist the Jefferson Davis Hospital for this purpose. He was also instrumental in converting the old Houston Navy Hospital to the Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital; Dr. DeBakey had recommended chat all VA hospitals, when possible, be affiliated with a medical school. In 1949, the new Houston Veterans Administration Hospital became affiliated with Baylor Universi$_{ty}$ College of Medicine, and in 2004 it was renamed The Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center.

The opening of The Methodist Hospical in 1951 (Fi$_{gu}$re 2) marked the beginning of an historic collaboration. Under the leadership of Dr. DeBakey and The Methodist Hospital President Ted Bowen (Figure 3), the two men forged an extraordinary relationship between the two instirutions. They established an intensive care unit, and Dr. DeBakey's Department of Surgery blossomed with faculty, residents, fellows, researchers, and visitors from throughout the world. His sisters, Professors Selma and Lois DeBakey, were recruited by Baylor in 1968 and dedicated their lives to supporting their brother's vision and efforts to establish a premier medical school for education, research, and patient care.

Figure 3. Mr. Ted Bowen, President of The Methodist Hospital, 1953-1983

As he and his associates pioneered and advanced the field of cardiovascular surgery, Baylor University College of Medicine, The Methodist Hospital. and The Texas Medical Center became a healch care mecca, offering new lifesaving operations and therapies. To support his clinical programs, Dr. DeBakey recruited highly qualified fuculty in ocher departments. Patients from all walks oflife flocked ro Houston hoping

Figure 4. Baylor University College of Medicine and Texas Medical Center, 1949

Figure 5. Texas Medical Center, present

for a miracle - and usually found one.

In 1964, Dr. DeBakey was instrumental in obtaining the initial National Institutes of Health funding to develop a total arcificial heart, and he and his colleagues built an outstanding research program ac Baylor University College of Medicine in collaboration with Rice University. Just rwo years lacer, Dr. DeBakey performed the first successful implantation of a paracorporeal left-ventricular assist device for postcardiocomy heart failure. In 1968, he was among che first in the United States co establish a heart transplant program, and he and his colleagues performed the first multi-organ donor harvest - transplanting a heart, lung, and rwo kidneys from one patient into four rec1p'1encs.

The multitasking Or. OeBakey became the first president of Baylor College of Medicine in 1969 while simultaneously serving as chairman of che Department of Surgery, and che Texas Medical Center continued co flourish and grow under his leadership (Figures 4 and 5).

Thar same year, upon Dr. DeBakey's recommendation, the board of the Baylor University College of Medicine voted to make the Houston medical school a free-standing, independent institution by separating it from Baylor University in Waco. As a result, Baylor College of Medicine was eligible co obtain federal and state grants for research and education. Dr. DeBakey's guidance and leadership transformed Baylor University College of Medicine from a struggling, newly formed medical school to one of the top-tier institutions in the nation.

In 1975, Dr. DeBakey participated in the establishment and funding of the National Heart and Blood Vessel Research and Development Centers. One of these elite centers was established at Baylor College of Medicine and The Methodist Hospital. He was also instrumental in creating the Michael E. DeBakey High School for Health Professions, a magnet school combining the best of the Houston Independent School District with on-site training at Baylor College of Medicine.

Surgical Repair

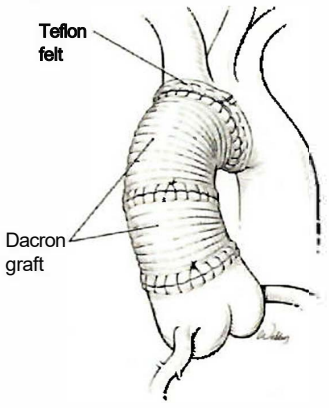

Figure 6. Diagram of surgery for Dr. DeBakey's type I dissecting aneurysm.

In 1988, Dr. DeBakey and I worked with engineers from NASA co develop an axial flow left-ventricular assist device. The MicroMed DeBakey Ventricular Device began clinical trials in Europe in 1998, with subsequent approval for clinical use, and U.S. Food and Drug Administration trials began in 2000. We are expecting FDA approval in the near future.

A new era in cardiovascular surgery is emerging. Endovascular procedures are being developed, reducing the need for many of the cardiac and vascular operations developed by Dr. DeBakey. Yet forever the visionary, he fully supported the development and refinement of these primary catheter-based procedures.

At the age of 97, Dr DeBakey was diagnosed with a type II dissecting aneurysm, and I performed the surgery that he and his colleagues had developed nearly 50 years earlier - the OeBakey classification and treatment for dissecting aneurysms. He had also developed the Dacron graft that was used in the procedure (Figure 6).

Dr. DeBakey was discouraged and disappointed in 2004 when Baylor College of Medicine and The Methodist

Figure 7. Dr. Michael E. DeBakey with his Congressional Gold Medal, with Ors. Matthias Loebe and George P. Noon

Hospital were unable to resolve their differences. He had been responsible for establishing excellence in both institutions, and both were proud of their relationship with the international icon. Boch inscitucions have facilities that bear his name: The Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine, and The Methodist DeBak$_{ey}$ Heart & Vascular Center at The Methodist Hospital. The Attorney General of Texas and many friends of Baylor College of Medicine and The Methodist Hospital encouraged both institutions to continue their fruitful collaborations. Dr. DeBakey was especially interested in reuniting the transplant and assist device program that was jointly established by the rwo institutions in the 1960s.

Dr. DeBakey performed around 60,000 surgeries. His awards, recognitions, and achievements are too numerous to list. He received prestigious national and international awards for boch medicine and research, such as the Alben Lasker Clinical Research Award in 1968 for his extraordinary courage and unprecedented technical skill in translating research for the correction of previously fatal diseases. His national stature, reverence, and esteem are reflected in the three highest honors an American citizen can receive: the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction, presented by President. Lyndon Johnson; the National Medal of Science, conferred by President Ronald Reagan; and the Congressional Gold Medal, presented by President George W. Bush. The inscription on the back of the medallion would always bring a smile to his face: "The pursuit of excellence has been my objective in life" (Figure 7).

Dr. DeBakey died unexpectedly on July 11, 2008, just short of his 100th birthd$_{ay}$ on September 7, 2008. God bless you, Dr. DeBakey. We will miss you dearly. *"Reqiescat in Pace."*