



James Wynford Pate, M.D.

August 28, 1928 - January 31, 2021

James Wynford Pate, M.D., died on January 31, 2021, of complications of CoVid-19 having lived his 92 years generously and profoundly. Born in Wedowee, Alabama, on August 28, 1928, Jim was preceded in death by his parents Wynford and Annie Grace Blount Pate and, in 2016, by his beloved wife of 68 years Anne Stephenson Pate. Although brought up in the small towns of rural Georgia and Alabama with his young widowed mother moving frequently for work, Jim was not limited by these modest, bucolic surroundings but instead became a passionately curious lifelong learner. Even at a young age, the scope of his intellect was evident to many. He impressed his fifth grade science teacher so much that she allowed him to dissect rabbits and birds on her kitchen table after school, much to the delight of his fellow schoolmates. In an effort to keep Jim occupied, school administrators allowed him to move forward two grades in one year twice. This practice allowed him to receive a full scholarship to Emory University where he earned his undergraduate degree at age 17.

However his love of Emory was somewhat diminished when his medical school application was later rejected by Emory because of his youth. This rejection was somewhat softened when Jim became a professor of surgery at the University of Tennessee in 1965, reportedly the youngest full professor of surgery at that time in the U.S. Upon reflection Jim wrote to the Emory Medical School Admissions Office informing them of his promotion and noting that his youth hadn't proved to be a too much of a problem in his academic success.

Jim received his medical degree from the the Medical College of Georgia in 1950 as a member of Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society. Serving during the Korean War, his graduate medical education included an internship at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, (June 1950-July 1951) followed by two successive residencies in General Surgery, the first also at the National Naval Medical Center (1951-1953) and the second at the University of Alabama (1953-1955). During his Bethesda residency, Jim headed the Division of Experimental Surgery where he helped to conceive and successfully develop the freeze-dried process for preserving arteries to use as grafts thus proving the practicality of this process for Korean War combat-wounded casualties. Additionally, during this time he was also the co-discoverer of the bioelectrical causes of

blood clots in arteries and veins. Following these two residencies, Jim completed an additional residency program in Thoracic Surgery (1955-1957) at the Veterans Administration Medical Teaching Group, Memphis, TN. In 1958 Jim became board certified in both General Surgery and Thoracic Surgery.

Upon completion of his medical education, Jim remained in Memphis to begin his medical career greatly benefitting many patients who would need his skillful care as well as scores of medical students under his tutelage. He was first appointed Assistant Chief of Thoracic Surgery at the Veterans Administration Hospital serving from July 1957 to February 1959. Following this service he joined the University of Tennessee Regional Medical Center (previously known as City of Memphis Hospitals) as Program Director of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery from 1959 to 1987. He also served the University of Tennessee Health Science Center as an Assistant Professor of Surgery and rapidly rose to become Professor of Surgery in 1965, following his tenure as Faculty President at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine in 1963 and 1964. Staff appointments in Memphis hospitals included many leadership roles as Program Director of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery, Chief of Open-Heart Surgery and Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery. He remained the Chairman of the Department of Surgery at University of Tennessee Hospital from 1974 to 1989.

After his success in freeze-drying tissues for long-term preservation for later transplantation, Jim implemented many programs and facilities which would set his students on the pathway to success.

Among Dr. Pate's accomplishments, he

- Was a team leader for the first animal and human transplantation of long-term stored arteries and bone;
- Co-developer of the world's first "Tissue Bank" in Bethesda, MD , and was therefore invited to present his findings at the very first International Conference on Transplantation in London in 1953;
- Established the first Tissue Banks at the University of Alabama in 1954, the University of Tennessee with Robert Reeder and the Veteran's Administration (1956).
- Established Open-Heart Surgery Programs at University of Tennessee (John Gaston Hospital), Baptist Memorial Hospital, the Veterans' Administration Hospital and St. Joseph's East (now St. Francis);
- Co-developed the first "Intensive Care Unit" with remote electronic monitoring of physiologic variables in 1960;
- Established the "Heart Transplant Program" at University of Tennessee (now UT-Baptist) in 1985;
- Co-led the establishment Tennessee's first statewide Level One regulated "Trauma System" including the Elvis Presley Regional Trauma Center and the Firefighters Regional Burn Center.

Jim was often recognized for his contributions to medicine. He authored more than 200 articles appearing in a variety of professional medical journals and contributed chapters on surgery to various medical textbooks. During the Vietnam War, Jim spent several months serving as a civilian surgeon teaching Vietnamese physicians modern operating techniques. During this time, he performed the first heart operation in Vietnam in 1972 and was awarded the Republic of South Vietnam's "Contributions to Surgery Award." In 1975 Jim also received the Golden Apple teaching award determined by UT Medical School students. Frequently Jim was invited to be a visiting professor worldwide in many countries including the United Kingdom, Thailand, Israel, Egypt, Greece, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Mexico. In 1978 he was one of four surgeons invited to introduce pacemakers to the People's Republic of China. In 1989 Dr. Pate received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from President H.W. Bush for "Service to United States Armed Forces" and also that year was named "Distinguished University Professor" by the University of Tennessee. In 1995 Jim was awarded the "Distinguished Alumnus Award" from the Medical College of Georgia.

In addition to being passionately curious for medical knowledge Jim was also fascinated by adventuresome travel, archeology, painting, sailing, scuba diving, snorkeling, skiing down and trekking up large mountains. For Jim's 60th birthday his wife Anne organized a trip for them to climb Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro. Of the 38 members in their climbing group, Jim and Anne Pate were two of the only seven who summited the peak and the oldest of those participants. Geopolitics sometimes arose but rarely interfered with the Pates' travel plans. An interest in archaeology spurred their travel plans to visit Syria and its ancient ruins in 1972. While in Beirut, Jim and Anne joined a German tour group for a day trip to Damascus. As travel to Syria was not allowed for Americans at that time, they of course were "outed" at the border and spent several hours at a desert military checkpoint. After much persuasion, Jim and Anne were granted a six-hour tour of the city with their own private armed military guard. Shortly after 9/11, the Pates were again in Damascus where they hovered in a hotel avoiding large anti-American riots while burning of US flags raged outside. Not to be dissuaded, they hired a tour guide/driver and enjoyed an educational tour of all of Syria. Jim said as he remembered that tense time in the world, "The Syrian people were very polite, hospitable, helpful and caring even as the local television networks constantly showed the killing of women and children by American bombs in Afghanistan."

Jim is survived by three devoted children who were asked everyday at dinner what three new things they each had learned that day. His son, James Wynford Pate II and his wife Elizabeth Lisle of New Orleans; his eldest daughter, Susan Pate Milner and her husband Robert R. Milner of Somerville, TN; and his youngest daughter, Patricia Lee Pate of Memphis, will greatly miss his guidance and their ever-present ability to "Google Dad" for the answer to every imaginable question. Dr. Pate also leaves his grandchildren, Lee

Anne Holman and her husband Craig of Milton, GA, and their children, Edwin James (EJ), Jackson and Leighton; Andrew Pate Akers of Cumming, GA, and his children, Jaeline, Adeline and Lydia; his step-grandchildren, Robert R. Milner, III, and his wife Marion of Somerville, TN; and Lee Whitman Milner of Mississippi. Additionally, Jim is survived by his friend and loving companion, Mackie Johnson of Memphis. The Pate Family will always appreciate the love and support of Mackie and her family, especially her daughters, Lee Anne Roehm of Memphis and Leslie Johnson Owen of Augusta, GA. A lover of all of God's creation, Jim was a brilliant intellect whose most outstanding quality was his humility.

A small private ceremony at Jim's graveside with Naval Military honors and eulogy was held with the Reverend Dr. Randy McCloy officiating. In lieu of flowers you may honor Jim's memory with a contribution to the Church Health Center, 1350 Concourse Ave. Suite 142, Memphis, 38104 or the Memphis Union Mission, 383 Poplar Ave., Memphis, 38105.

Comments



“ Jimmy, Susan and Pat, I was so sorry to hear of the passing of Jim and he will be missed by all. God bless the family with comfort and peace at this time and I send my love to the family. Sincerely in Christ, Joan Snead Kropff

Joan - March 25 at 06:28 PM



“ I love Dr. Pate. The whole family was such a huge part of my life. I have very fond memories of him.

Anne Frase - March 08 at 07:49 PM



“ I never met Dr. Pate, but I heard such wonderful things about him from Mackie Johnson, and the photos she shared of them together are lovely. I only wish I had met him.
Melinda B. Parsons

Melinda Parsons - February 18 at 06:07 PM



“ David Blackburn lit a candle in memory of James Wynford Pate, M.D.



David Blackburn - February 06 at 07:17 AM