Cardiology in the Young

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Obituary

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‡The original version of this article was published without two photographs. An addendum detailing this has been published and the error rectified in the online PDF and HTML copies.

Obituary - Leonard Bailey

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I am sad to report the passing of our dear friend and colleague, Dr. Leonard Bailey, who passed away May 12th after a long battle with cancer. As someone who trained at Loma Linda, I got to know Dr. Bailey very well and remained friends with him over the last 20 years. He was the pioneer of neonatal heart transplantation and served on the staff at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital for more than four decades. His interest in infant heart transplantation began in the 1980s when babies with hypoplastic left heart syndrome were dying and surgeons were searching for solutions. The first successful infant heart transplant took place in 1984, the controversial "Baby Fae" case. In this operation, Dr. Bailey transplanted a baboon heart into an infant who survived 3 weeks. This work paved the way for the first successful human-to-human transplant, also performed by Dr. Bailey, in November 1985.

His contributions to our specialty as a colleague were genuine. Congenital surgeons in Dr. Bailey's era were constantly brainstorming and sharing their successes, as well as their disappointments, which occurred all too frequently. He was committed to finding answers, taking chances, and innovating constantly. He was a genius who never gave up, and his patients were the centre of his world. He defined determination and grit. He was a dedicated educator and an inspiration to many, many students and young surgical trainees. He helped me with every case that I ever did when I was in his operating room, and his style and surgical techniques live on in my practice today. Underneath his superior intellect and drive was a man of intellectual honesty, humility, and kindness. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word and he was held in the highest regard by his peers everywhere. The world would be a better place if we all had a little Len Bailey in us.



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As I reflect on my fondest memories of training, I can say that my time in Southern California ranks at the top of the list, in large part because of the unique atmosphere at Loma Linda filled with kind, intellectually curious, welcoming people, no doubt an effect that trickled down from the leadership and example set by Dr. Bailey.

Dr. Bailey's passing only 1 month after losing his wife Nancy is a pattern that occurs with many true partners in life. After battling his cancer for 18 years, he hung on until Nancy's difficult battle with cancer came to an end. Please join me in expressing our deepest condolences to Dr. Bailey's two sons who survive him.

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