



## Editorial

# Remarks for O.H. Frazier, M.D.

Heartware Event 4.27.2016.

U.S. National Archives. Washington, D.C.

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It is very fitting that we are gathered here in the National Archives to honor Dr. Bud Frazier, as he truly is a founding father of the field of mechanical circulatory support.

Without his persistence and efforts in this field, we would be as lost as if there had been no Washington, Adams, Madison or Jefferson to guide our fledgling democracy nearly 250 years ago.

For the next few minutes, I wanted to talk about how Dr. Frazier has supported many of us in this field as both a mentor and dear friend.

Dr Frazier teaches with stories. We are all familiar with these stories, which he spins with the drop of a proverbial hat.

All have a lesson or give insight into his development, which is critical to understanding the development of this field. Most are extremely humorous.



**Dr. O.H. Frazier in Washington D.C., April 27, 2016**

Citation: McGee, E. (2016).  
" Remarks for O.H. Frazier,  
M.D."

*The VAD Journal*, 2. doi:  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.13023/VAD.2016.10>

Editor-in-Chief: Maya Guglin,  
University of Kentucky

Received: May 7, 2016

Accepted: May 7, 2016

Published: May 7, 2016

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Funding: Not applicable

Competing interests: Not applicable



Stories from his childhood like playing pinball on the machine adorned with the picture of the high kicking majorette that was destroyed by the fervent Baptist minister, Emil V Becker, in order to protect the young boys of Stephenville, TX, from the sins of lasciviousness and gambling. Or the stories of his namesake, Uncle Bud, the gunfighter; or the track star and coach, Uncle Mule who struggled with the "... vices of women, liquor and gambling...but in no particular order."

Later stories from his medical school and residency years, such as when George Noon was teaching Dr. Frazier how to present x-rays late one night, and Dr. Debakey leapt out of his office "like a panther" and ladled a flurry of expletives on poor Dr. Noon to the extent that Dr Frazier thought his given name was indeed Goddammit. Or when Dr. Debakey "frogged" the chest of Dr Frazier with his boney knuckle to get across the importance of Virchow's triad, and why Mr. Kaplan's fem-pop graft kept going clotting. "Repeat after me...when blood doesn't move it clots,. Can't you get that through your pea size brain!"

But other stories he tells are gut wrenching and painful...such as Dr Cooley's bad day when 3 children died and Bud had to find solace by reading scripture; or the young Italian boy with rheumatic heart disease that arrested the night after a mitral valve replacement and whose eyes were open and cognizant as long as medical student Frazier massaged his heart.

Dealing with failure...ultimately dealing with Death... is one of the hardest aspects of this profession. Many of us struggle with this and ultimately have some degree of post traumatic stress disorder as a result. In the video of Dr Frazier that has been playing you hear him state that anyone can deal with success ...the tough part is dealing with failure. He admonishes us to continue in the game....to continue in the fight. Any time spent with him can tell you how painful this has been for him. You can see it in his eyes, the pain of all of those fights. But his career is testament to the rewards and advances that come if we can learn to deal with failure and continue in the fight. Only then can advances be made and lives saved. All of the current pumps initially had issues and could have been failures had it not been for Frazier and his colleagues and patients staying in the fight to push the field forward. As a result, countless lives have been saved.

Of course I had known of him for many years but I did not first directly work with Dr. Frazier until during my first year of practice, when I was his guest at Texas heart. My visit took place early during the Heartmate II trial. As I had no Texas medical license and had never operated with him, I expected only to observe. "Get McGee a gown" I heard him say and it was with some trepidation that I scrubbed and subsequently sewed in my first Heartmate II. I realized it was a whole different ball game in Texas.

After that visit I began to routinely call him with questions when they arose and ultimately visited many times over the years in the animal lab or at the rodeo meeting. He has helped me with countless numbers of my patients. I last called him only a few weeks ago about a patient that we had at Loyola who had a malfunctioning pump. To this day he is always available and is an endless source of clinical information.



One of the greatest honors of my career centered around a patient that was referred to me by Dr Frazier. The patient was a teenager in the Chicago suburbs with an aspergilloma of his left ventricular apex. The referring doctor initially called Dr Frazier for advice and he said she should refer the patient to me for management. When I called Dr Frazier to discuss the patient, he recounted a case 20 years prior that he had successfully managed with a similar problem. Thankfully we were able to get the boy taken care of and he has done well.

Dr Frazier is very adept at playing the curmudgeon at meetings, but those of us who know him well consider him to be one of the warmest and most gentle humans we know. One of his former transplant nurses, told me of this young infant girl who had received a heart transplant in the late 80's at Texas heart. She had quite the stormy course and during her long ICU stay was found to have a new stuffed animal in her crib each day, which arrived in the wee hours of the morning. Nobody knew where these animals came from. Determined to get to the bottom of the mystery, Julia, one morning came in early and found Dr Frazier pulling a small bear out of his lab coat to place in the crib. "You better not tell anyone or else..." was his reply as he left the room, probably pulling out a copy of Shakespeare's sonnets to read.

Several summers ago my wife, Dawn, and I were lucky to have Dr. Frazier and Dan Tamez over to our house for dinner when they were in town at a meeting. My 2 sons, Billy, then 10, and Finn, then 7, instantly gravitated towards him. He asked them about the sports they were playing and what they were studying in school. It was a very enjoyable evening. When it was time for Dan and Dr. Frazier to go, we noticed that Dr Frazier's cane was still at the table. I sent Finn to fetch the cane and as he was bringing it to us, I noticed Finn was pulling at its handle. When I asked, "Finn, what are you doing?" I got the reply, "Dad, I wanted to see if Dr Frazier had a sword cane, he looks like he ought to have a sword cane."

I think what with the hat and the long gray hair and his stories, my sons were convinced that Dr Frazier was a hero from Harry Potter - that Dawn had been reading to them.

One of my most treasured mementos of the that evening was an inscription he left on our copy of the book *Hearts*, which you should all read if you haven't yet. "To Dawn and Ed McGee, with thanks for a wonderful evening with you and your wonderful family. I hope you enjoy the book. It's all true. I lived through it. "

Indeed you did, Dr. Frazier, indeed you did.

To many of us Dr. Frazier, you are the warrior poet of this field who has seen it all and done it all. Despite your retirement, many of us will continue to call on you for advice and encouragement for years to come, and we will forever owe you a debt of gratitude for teaching us how to stay in this incredible fight.