



# William Wayne Montgomery



The profession of medicine and the Department of Otolaryngology and Laryngology at the Harvard Medical School lost a major figure upon the passing of William Wayne Montgomery, M.D., on November 7, 2003.

This man, who would later be known internationally for his contributions to medicine and surgery, was born in Proctor, Vermont, on August 20, 1923. He received his A.B. from Middlebury College in 1944, and his M.D. in 1947 from the University of Vermont Medical School in Burlington. He then served his internship in General Surgery at the Mary Fletcher Hospital in Burlington. He had a general practice of medicine and surgery in West Rutland, Vermont for two years, from 1948 to 1950. With the outbreak of the Korean conflict, he served as a battalion surgeon from 1950 to 1952 in the United States Navy, which he later described in his fascinating memoir, *The Mustache That Walks Like a Man* (published in

1995). He was awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star with Valor. After leaving the service, “Monty” became a resident in Otolaryngology at the Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, and then joined the faculty at Harvard Medical School, where together with his colleague and chief, Harold F. Schuknecht, M.D., he helped to develop an outstanding academic department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. He was appointed Professor of Otolaryngology and Laryngology in 1970, and became the first John W. Merriam Professor of Otolaryngology and Laryngology in 1993.

Monty’s professional career is internationally recognized. He was the author of over 180 publications on a wide variety of subjects. Perhaps his most influential publication was the book *Surgery of the Upper Respiratory System*, which saw three editions. He held leadership roles in the Triologic Society, and he served as President of the New England Otolaryngological Society. He was the recipient of the Harris P. Mosher Memorial Award from the Triological Society, a Presidential Citation from the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery in 1984, the Newcombe Award from the American Laryngologic Association in 1990, and the Chevalier Jackson Award from the American Bronchoesophagologic Society in 1991. He retired from clinical practice in May 2002, but continued to serve actively as a teacher and researcher in an effort to develop better techniques in the management of the

compromised airway.

Many of those whose lives have been positively influenced by the career of Professor Montgomery met for a Festschrift in his honor at The Equinox in Manchester Village, Vermont, on September 25-26, 1998. Those gathered knew him in several capacities: as a mentor, colleague, faculty member, and personal friend.

In Otolaryngology, Monty made seminal contributions to most of the subspecialty areas. In otology and neurotology, he wrote papers on acoustic neuroma and spinal fluid leak. In cranial base surgery, he wrote on the pterygomaxillary fossa and transthemoidal hypophysectomy. In head and neck surgery, his papers on reconstruction of the cervical esophagus, repair of tracheo-esophageal fistula and the invention of the salivary bypass tube are still relevant today. In pediatric otolaryngology, he made important contributions to the management of laryngotracheal stenosis and the invention of the T-tube and keel. In general otolaryngology, he popularized the osteoplastic frontal sinus obliteration. In laryngology, he contributed to the understanding of cricoarytenoid arthritis, and management of chronic aspiration and thyroplasty. He accomplished so much and significantly shaped contemporary otolaryngology in all of these areas, a feat unlikely to be matched by anyone today. His magnum opus *Surgery of the Upper Respiratory System* clearly displays the breadth of his contributions to our profession.

Monty recognized early the importance of interspecialty cooperation in the management of patients whose surgical problems crossed conventional anatomical specialty jurisdiction. Thus, he contributed to the management of acoustic neuroma, working with Dr. Robert Ojemann, his neurosurgical colleague. His work on tracheal stenosis with Dr. Hermes Grillo, his colleague in thoracic surgery, led to incorporation of Montgomery's technique for laryngeal release into thoracic surgical approaches to tracheal reconstruction and the widespread use of Montgomery's silicone T-tube for multiple purposes in managing difficult tracheal lesions and complications of tracheal surgery.

Monty's professional career was characterized by his strong belief in personal observations and experience, undoubtedly derived from his Vermont background. His approach to research was no-nonsense, straightforward, and direct. His writings were free of tortuous circumlocutions. He preferred to teach by example. His surgery never remained static; he established a laboratory where he developed new instruments and devices, always striving to improve his clinical results. Although much of his surgery on cancer patients necessitated removal of tissue, his orientation was always towards maintaining or restoring function. His reputation was established by impressing his peers rather than through public relations or self-promotion. He was secure in his own judgments and was never afraid to voice his opinions in a laconic yet insightful manner that left no doubt as to where he stood. Monty's teaching was not limited to training surgeons. When an academic program was being organized to train basic scientists in speech and hearing, he supported the effort in both words and deeds. He struggled to instill in these graduate students a sense of how otolaryngologists think and act. As a result, he earned their respect and gratitude; a few even became otolaryngologists.

He had a genuine and abiding interest in the promotion and success of others. In this regard, patients, friends, and students alike recognized his humanistic qualities. He was an extraordinary teacher and role model, and he captivated the imagination and admiration of several generations of residents. He was a sage advisor. Clinically, he was the go-to person for any difficult problem. He was also capable of navigating the treacherous waters of medical politics.

Above all, Monty truly cared for his patients. Their concerns and questions were answered with unhurried care, and their best interest was his first priority in making decisions about treatment. His talent for technical innovation never overshadowed his humanity.

In addition to his professional life, Monty had several outdoor interests, including gardening, hiking, snowshoeing, photography, skiing, and tennis. A particular hobby was woodcarving, in which his creative skills as a surgeon were displayed in a different medium. The traits of independent thinking and intellectual integrity were amply exemplified in both his professional and personal lives.

Despite a stellar career, he continually demonstrated his personal humility and a low-key approach and gentleness. Those who knew him well appreciated his wry humor and his sense of the absurd. Despite his passing, his ingenuity, professional accomplishments, writings and students will continue to contribute greatly to the well-being of our profession and our patients. We will miss him deeply, but his contributions will continue to guide us.

Dr. Montgomery is survived by his sister, Jane Montgomery of Chestnut Hill, MA; his sons Lynn Daniel Montgomery of Placitas, NM, Scott William Montgomery of Addison, NY, Stuart Kelley Montgomery of Hopkinton, MA, Leslie Ide Montgomery of Brattleboro, VT, and Robert Montgomery of Fairlee, VT; seven grandchildren, two nieces and three nephews.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph B. Nadol, Jr., *Chairperson*

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