



# George Russell Prout, Jr.



*Photograph courtesy of Michael J. Droller, MD*

George Russell Prout, Jr., Professor *emeritus* of Urology at the Harvard Medical School and former Chief of the Urology Services at the Massachusetts General Hospital (1969-89), left a lasting legacy of having advanced an understanding of the biology, evaluation and treatment of urologic cancers through his formidable knowledge and insights, his support and mentorship of young physicians, investigators and colleagues, his commitment to the highest standards of patient care, his founding of the leading journal in the field of urologic oncology, and his leadership of investigative groups and task forces in urologic oncology at National and International levels. As an excellent teacher and surgeon, and as a visionary researcher, administrator and leader he was variously described as a brilliant, fearless, compassionate, and honest investigator and physician who expressed strong opinions with insight, commitment, and a caring heart.

George R. Prout, Jr. was born July 23, 1924 in Quincy, Massachusetts to Marion Snow Prout and George R. Prout, Sr. His father was Vice President of the General Electric Corporation and a senior member of the

Manhattan Project team that witnessed the testing of the implosion plutonium bomb at Alamogordo, New Mexico in July, 1945. His father's executive position spanning industry and government accounted for George spending some of his childhood in Dallas, Texas before the family relocated to Schenectady, New York.

There, George attended high school and then Union College for two years on an accelerated program. He received his Medical degree from the Albany Medical College in 1947 and was elected to the Alpha Omega Alpha medical honor society. George interned and served as Assistant Resident at Grasslands Hospital in Valhalla, New York from 1947-50. It was during this time that he met and married Loa Katherine Wheatley (1950) with whom he spent the next 63 years.

George took a commission in the U.S. Navy (1950-52) and was stationed out of Newport, Rhode Island, spending one of the two years on the Hospital Ship "Repose" in the Western Pacific off the coast of Korea during the Korean conflict. On completion of his military service George began a residency in Urology

(1952-54) at the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center under Victor F. Marshall, M.D. He served as a Fellow for one year (1954-55) under Willet Whitmore, M.D. at the Memorial Hospital Center for Cancer and Allied Diseases (now The Memorial Sloane-Kettering Cancer Center) before returning to New York Hospital to complete his Residency in Urology as Chief Resident (1955-56). His son George R. Prout III was born in 1956.

Following his training, George took a position as an Assistant Attending Physician at Memorial Hospital (1956-57). Within the year he was recruited to the University of Miami Medical Center to become the first Chairman (1957-60) of its newly created Department of Urology. In this role, he served at the entering rank of Assistant Professor (1957-58) and then Associate Professor (1958-60). His daughter Elizabeth (Betsy) was born during this time (1959).

His “best laid plans” suddenly changed when he was recruited to the Professorship and Chair of Urology at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond, part of the Virginia Commonwealth University, following the murder of its Chairman, Dr. Austin I. Dodson, in Feb, 1959. George served at MCV/VCU from 1960-69, using his innovative mind, dogged energy, and strong administrative and leadership skills in developing the research and clinical components of the Urology Division. His creativity and vision prompted him to begin collaborative studies on the immunology of the prostate, publishing original observations on the antigenicity of sperm-free ejaculates and human prostate acid phosphatase when such areas of research were in their infancy. He also collaborated with Dr. David Hume, Chair of Surgery and formerly of the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, in pioneering the establishment of the Renal Transplant Program with the integral involvement of Urology.

In 1969, George was recruited to become Chief of the Urology Service at the Massachusetts General Hospital and Professor of Urology at the Harvard Medical School. He would serve in these positions for the next 20 years, becoming Professor *emeritus* on his retirement in 1989. George brought with him the clinical and laboratory research programs he had begun at MCV/VCU. Although many perceived him as an imposing and even intimidating figure, he was also seen as supportive of the young physicians, scientists, and colleagues with whom he worked. During his leadership in this and previous academic positions he was responsible for the training of more than 75 residents and fellows, many of whom would become Professors and Chairs in departments nationally and worldwide. His leadership in clinical and laboratory research efforts also led to the publication of more than 280 original research and review articles and book chapters. His patients loved him as a caring and compassionate physician. Privately, he became known to his faculty colleagues and friends as “Gerp”.

During this time he began to assume leadership positions in a number of National study groups and task forces to advance clinical initiatives in prostate and bladder cancer. George had the vision, wisdom and force of character to include colleagues from multiple disciplines in the design and implementation of the clinical studies these groups addressed. He thus brought together urologists, medical oncologists, pathologists, radiation oncologists and statisticians in these efforts. Their studies led to observations and insights that increased an understanding of the biology of these cancers and greatly enhanced their evaluation and treatment.

During his two decades at Harvard and the MGH, George became Chair of the Committee on Adjuvants in the Surgical Management of Bladder Cancer (1965-70); Vice Chair of the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (1973-77); and, Chair of the Task Force on Staging of Cancer Sites on the American Joint Committee of the American College of Surgeons (1977-85). He also became Chair of

the Therapeutic Unit of the National Bladder Cancer Group (1979-82); Member of the American College of Pathology Task Force on Bladder Cancer (1979-82); and, Consultant to the Cancer Information Service (1984-89).

Early in his tenure, George made a signal decision when he began a collaboration with Dr. Gil Friedell and members of the Pathology Department at the University of Massachusetts in Worcester to pursue basic and clinical research on bladder cancer. Together, they formed the NCI-funded National Bladder Cancer Project. George soon extended this to include multidisciplinary clinicians and statisticians when he founded and became Chair of the National Bladder Cancer Collaborative Group A (NBCCGA) (1973-87). Clinicians and investigators in this group were not only multidisciplinary but also representative of many medical departments and research institutions nationwide.

In leading NCI-funded studies by this group, Dr. Prout's emphasis on data and not anecdote was rigorous and strict. His strong opinions occasionally made him seem abrasive and confrontational. Those who knew him, however, ascribed this to his dedication to honesty and truth as underlying his mission to apply an understanding of cancer biology in identifying effective treatments for bladder cancer.

The NBCCGA studies were designed to standardize approaches in bladder cancer diagnosis and treatment. Patients accessioned to these studies were stratified according to cancer stage and grade. Study protocols were strict. Their rigor was guided by central pathology and cytology review. Each of the guidelines and metrics they identified were innovations. Their implementation allowed biologic understanding and translational clinical application. The standards George set and demanded influenced a generation of clinical investigators not only in urology but in other oncologic disciplines. The results of these studies, the insights they provided, and the lessons they taught left a lasting legacy for physicians and the patients for whom they would care.

George became Professor *emeritus* on his retirement in 1989 and relocated to Annapolis, Maryland. This allowed him to continue his love of competitive sailing on the Chesapeake Bay and of duck and goose-hunting on the Eastern Shore.

However, his restless mind, intensity, and physical vigor did not allow him to adopt a reclusive life style. Within several years he founded a new journal, *Urologic Oncology*, and became its Editor (1995-2000). As was typical of George, he invited several young colleagues to assist him in an editorial capacity. Effectively a derivative of the earlier NBCCGA, the journal included multidisciplinary clinicians and laboratory investigators on its founding Editorial Board. George's vision was to foster communication between clinicians and basic researchers in presenting their research results to one another through the journal and applying study observations in a translational manner to patients. The first journal exclusively dedicated to urologic oncology, it became the "official journal" of the Society of Urologic Oncology in 2001 under the guidance of Dr. Michael J. Droller, who succeeded George as Editor. Now known as *Urologic Oncology: Seminars and Original Investigations*, the Journal has achieved 25 years of publication, growth, and influential importance in urologic oncology as it continues in fulfilling George's vision.

George Prout was a member of many professional organizations: the Society of Urologic Oncology; the American Urological Association; the Canadian Urological Association; the Society of Clinical Oncology; the American College of Surgeons; the Societe Internationale d'Urologie; and the New York Academy of Sciences. He was especially proud to be elected to the American Association of

Genitourinary Surgeons (1969).

George was also the recipient of several honors. These included election to Alpha Omega Alpha; a D. Sc. (Hon) from Albany Medical College; and a Master of Arts (Hon) from Harvard Medical School.

In addition to his many professional achievements, George was an avid and accomplished sportsman. He loved sailing and teaching young people how to sail and race. Spring and summer saw George racing half-ton sloops at the Fishing Bay Yacht Club in Virginia, the Boston Yacht Club in Marblehead, Mass. and the Annapolis Yacht Club. During the autumn of each year you could find George in a blind on the Eastern Shore hunting ducks and geese. He loved salt water fishing from his second home in Duck Key, Florida and fly fishing for trout and land-locked salmon on Lake Kennebec, Maine.

George Prout was a multi-talented and brilliant man. He was an accomplished surgeon, productive researcher, and capable administrator. He was a voracious reader and engaging speaker. Although he might sometimes express strong opinions in what seemed like an overly forceful manner, those who understood him knew him to have a soft and compassionate heart beneath his outer crust.

George embraced his life with intensity and eagerness, attributes which also affected those whose lives he touched. George died peacefully on November 12, 2013 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. He contributed much, touched many, and left behind a legacy that strongly influenced and benefitted colleagues, patients, students, and friends.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Droller, M.D., *Chairman*

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