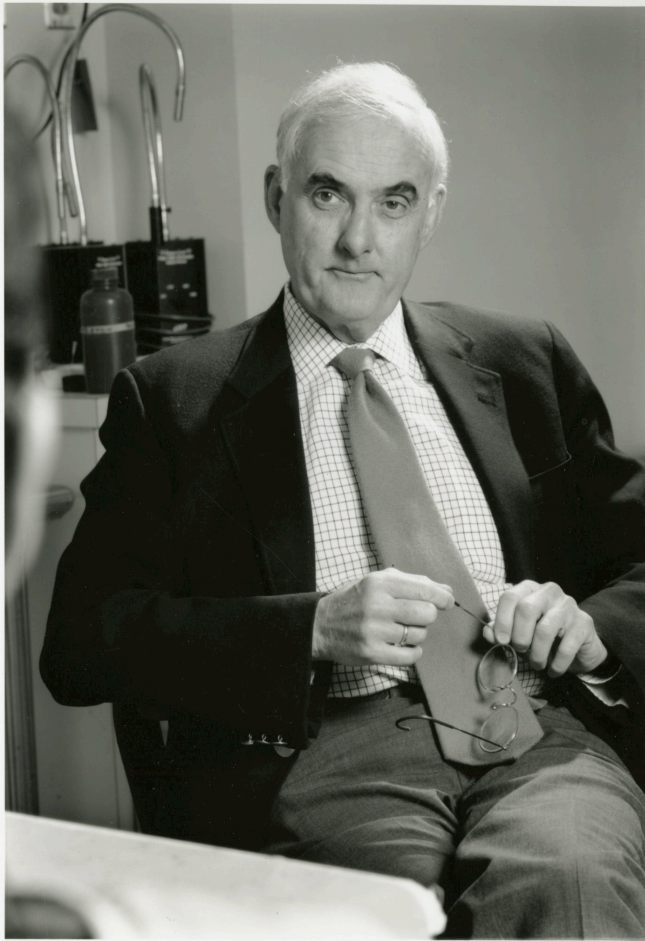




Nicholas Lechmere Tilney



(1935 - 2013) Nicholas Tilney was relentlessly cheerful in his enthusiasm for his career as an innovative transplant surgeon.

Dr. Tilney graduated from Harvard College in 1958 with an A.B. in Art History and proudly captained a winning Harvard heavyweight crew. He went on to obtain a medical degree at Cornell University Medical College and, from there, he served as Intern and Junior Resident in Surgery at Presbyterian-St. Luke's Hospital in Chicago. He completed his surgical training at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital (PBBH) in Boston under its then Surgeon-in-Chief, Francis D. Moore. Early in his training, Dr. Tilney became fascinated with the foundational work in transplantation performed by Nobel laureate Dr. Joseph E. Murray and his team at PBBH. Dr. Murray carried out the first successful organ transplant in 1954 between identical twins and pioneered the clinical use of immunosuppression, culminating in the first successful non-identical twin transplant in 1962, just as Dr. Tilney began his internship. He became increasingly interested both in the clinical advancement and the evolving science of transplantation biology.

After spending time as a surgeon in the US Navy during the Vietnam War, Dr. Tilney received the G.G. Peters Travelling Fellowship at the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology at Oxford University, where he worked under the tutelage of Professor James L. Gowans F.R.S. in the emerging field of cellular immunology. He returned to the PBBH to complete his residency and then completed a second year as the G.G. Peters Travelling Fellow, finishing his studies as the Harvard Exchange Fellow at Western Infirmary in Glasgow, Scotland. In 1973, he joined the faculty of PBBH as a general and vascular surgeon and Instructor in Surgery at Harvard Medical School. Three years later, he became Director of the Transplant Service at PBBH (later Brigham and Women's Hospital) and became Director of the Surgical Research Laboratory, Harvard Medical School, in 1975. Working at the Brigham throughout the bulk of his career, Dr. Tilney went on to become Senior Surgeon at BWH, Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School

*In tribute to their dedicated efforts to science and medicine, deceased members of the Harvard Faculty of Medicine (those at the rank of full or emeritus professor) receive a review of their life and contributions with a complete reflection, a **Memorial Minute**.*

(1983), and then in 1992, he was the first incumbent of the Francis D. Moore Professorship of Surgery at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Tilney was among the most truly dedicated surgeon/scientists of his time. In his clinical work as a renal transplant surgeon, he made critical strides in developing ways to lower the mortality rate of transplant recipients at the time. In particular, Dr. Tilney was among the first to test cyclosporine, a novel and more specific immunosuppressive drug in clinical transplantation. Due to these studies, the rates of transplant loss fell dramatically along with the death rate of patients previously affected by non-specific massive immunosuppression.

Much of Dr. Tilney's early investigative work examined the cellular immunology of events occurring during acute rejection of organ transplants in experimental models. After devising a method to remove host cells that were infiltrating the transplanted organs, he then described, with others, the biology of cellular rejection by identifying lymphocyte populations and subpopulations, their interactions, and the role of cytokines and other cellular products during transplantation. With the advent of cyclosporine and then monoclonal antibodies directed at T-cell subsets, acute rejections declined, but rates of chronic rejection remained unaffected. Chronic transplant failure became a lasting interest, with emphasis on factors responsible for its pathogenesis. Dr. Tilney was the first to raise attention to this clinically important problem and delineated in his elegant animal studies a series of antigen-independent stimuli. He brought the detrimental effects of brain death and the impact of ischemia on transplantation to our attention and studied the correlation of injury and immune responses. In sum, the laboratory was extremely productive. Dr. Tilney was awarded NIH funding for nearly three decades and trained more than 40 research fellows from all over the world, many of whom went on to lead academia in transplantation.

Dr. Tilney published over 550 scientific papers and chapters. During the last decade of his life, he published three books: *Transplant – from Myth to Reality* (2003); *A Perfectly Striking Departure: Surgeons and Surgery at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, 1912-1980* (2006); and, most recently, *Invasion of the Body: Revolutions in Surgery* (2011). Moreover, he edited two textbooks: *Surgical Care of the Patient with Renal Failure* and *Transplantation Biology: Cellular and Molecular Aspects*. With Sir Peter Morris, he was co-founder and co-editor of a review journal, *Transplantation Reviews*. He served on numerous editorial boards of professional journals. He was Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the New England Organ Bank, President of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons and President of the Transplantation Society. Among his many notable honors were The Roche Pioneer Award from the American Society of Transplant Surgeons and The Roche Distinguished Achievement Award from the American Society of Transplant Physicians. He was a prominent visiting professor and visiting lecturer throughout the world, and received an honorary degree from the Medical University of Warsaw.

Dr. Tilney was a gentleman and a loyal friend to many throughout his life, always noted for his friendly and warm demeanor. He was an individualist and a person who had the ability to put everything in to its proper perspective. Famously, he was known to take call on Dr. Moore's busy clinical service as a senior resident, while rowing a scull on the Charles River. Few others would have dared, and no others would have dared to tell. He was also a thoughtful and wonderful colleague, forging a highly collaborative partnership with the Division of Nephrology and its leadership that spanned both the inpatient and outpatient domain. This effort became a model that was widely adopted. Dr. Tilney and his wife Mary always had an open invitation for post-docs, residents and their families at their wonderful home overlooking the Boston Common and at their home in New Castle, NH. The warmth of

those relationships continued throughout the generations and just as generously given to the children of fellows and residents. His wife, Mary Graves, managed his laboratory over three decades and became the mother-in-residence for the many post-doctoral fellows. One of Dr. Tilney's fondest memories was his service on the Admissions Committee of Harvard Medical School, where he enjoyed meeting the brilliant young applicants as well as the collegiality of his fellow committee members.

In his book, *The Little History of the World*, the art historian, Sir Ernst Gombrich compared world history to an ocean and the impact of the individual on world history to an air bubble in the ocean. In line with this metaphor, Dr. Tilney's life and achievements created a tidal wave. With Mary always at his side, Dr. Tilney bravely fought a long-term illness and died on March 13, 2013 in his home in Boston. In addition to his wife Mary, Dr. Tilney's legacy will be carried on by his daughters Rebecca, Louise, Victoria, and Frances, and his nine grandchildren, including the newest member of the family, grandson Nicholas. Nick's accomplishments, outstanding contributions to our field, and collegiality will continue to set an example for us as clinician/scientists and researchers

Respectfully submitted,
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