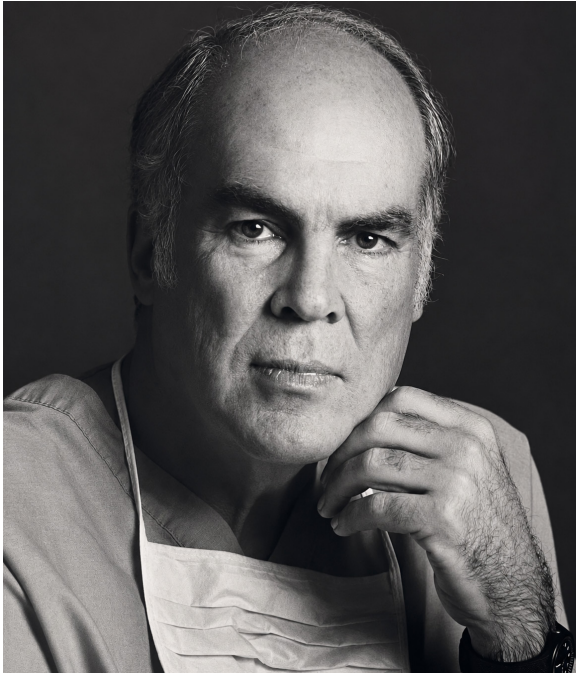




THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE
Harvard University

Clement B. Sledge



Photograph courtesy of the Sledge family

A pioneer in many areas of orthopaedic surgery and total joint arthroplasty, as well as an incomparable leader in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital (where he served as the inaugural chair of the nascent department), Clement B. Sledge died on February 26, 2025.

Dr. Sledge was born on November 1, 1930 in Ada, Oklahoma to John B. Sledge, originally from Johnson County, Texas, and Mollie D. Blount of Pensacola, Florida. He commenced undergraduate education at the University of the South (Sewanee, Tennessee) and then matriculated to Yale University where he received the degree of Doctor of Medicine. Upon graduation from medical school, Dr. Sledge pursued formal surgical training at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri and then was commissioned as a medical officer in the US Navy. He went on to complete two-years' service as the Chief Surgical Officer aboard the USS Macon. At the end of his naval service, Dr. Sledge

enrolled in the orthopaedic surgery residency program administered through Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). Following graduation from residency, he took a position with Dr. Honor Fell at the Strangeways Research Laboratory in Cambridge, UK, studying lysosomal enzymes and culture techniques. He would spend three years in Cambridge, working toward a doctoral degree that he unfortunately was never able to complete. His studies in Cambridge were cut short by the passing of his parents and the need to return to the US to settle family affairs. Subsequently, Dr. Sledge elected to return to clinical practice, and he joined the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at MGH.

Shortly thereafter, Dr. Sledge took the helm of orthopaedics at the Robert Breck Brigham Hospital. Whereas Orthopaedics had previously been nested within the Department of Surgery at what would soon become the Brigham and Women's system, Dr. Sledge foresaw a different path for orthopaedics going forward. With a strong vision, entrepreneurial spirit, and unrelenting determination, he was able to lead the establishment of the first independent Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the Robert Breck Brigham Hospital. Dr. Sledge's move to the Robert Breck Brigham was facilitated by the creation of independent departments of orthopaedic surgery and rheumatology at the institution, where Dr. Sledge was also named Surgeon-in-Chief.

*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**.*

Dr. Sledge would also become the first, full-time, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at the Robert Breck Brigham Hospital, as well as the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital with which it was soon to merge. Dr. Sledge was further promoted to the prestigious *John Ball and Buckminster Brown Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery* at Harvard Medical School, the oldest endowed professorship in the orthopaedic discipline at the medical school.

Dr. Sledge would proceed to oversee the growth and development of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at what would eventually be called Brigham and Women's Hospital (as of the 1980 merger). He held the Chair position for 26 years, engineering strategic growth and the development of subspecialty divisions, a productive orthopaedic research laboratory and research foundation, as well as the initiation of a practice plan. At the time of his initial assumption of the chair position, the orthopaedic department at the Brigham was comprised of just three surgeons. Upon his stepping down from the role of chair in 1996, the department had grown to over 75 faculty members. During his tenure, Dr. Sledge was integral in steering the merger of the different orthopaedic surgery residency programs that existed within the Harvard system into the HMS-wide Harvard Combined Orthopaedic Program (HCORP).

Dr. Sledge was a skilled surgeon, accomplished leader and administrator, as well as a prolific researcher. Over the course of his career, he published more than 130 articles in the peer-reviewed literature. Dr. Sledge's area of clinical focus was in total joint arthroplasty, and his experience aided in the development and refinement of several early total knee replacement, total hip replacement, total elbow replacement, and total shoulder replacement systems. He possessed a curious and prescient mind, and many of his areas of special research interest were not only cutting-edge for their time, but also continue to resonate in the present. For example, he was an early advocate of patient reported outcome measures and played a vital role in the development of the Total Hip Arthroplasty Outcome Evaluation Questionnaire and the Knee Society Clinical Rating System. He also was a leading proponent of total joint registries and instituted one of the first examples of a systematic registry, including patient-reported outcomes, at the Brigham. Dr. Sledge maintained a separate research focus on improving arthroplasty component fixation and limiting the prospect of aseptic loosening. His work was at the forefront of understanding the effects of radiation synovectomy in pigmented villonodular synovitis, and he was instrumental in the development of cruciate retaining total knee implants. He was the first author on a 1987 article in the *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* that expanded the use of radiation synovectomy to the treatment of the rheumatoid knee.

Dr. Sledge had a quick wit and deep sense of humor as well as an affable personality that readily engaged clinical colleagues, trainees and hospital staff. He had a keen interest in the career development of young physicians. He maintained a broad range of interests that extended well beyond medicine, with avocational areas of expertise in the history of World War II, wood working, sailing, and tennis. He was recognized nationally and internationally as a first-class orthopaedic thought leader, rising to the Presidency of the Orthopaedic Research Society in 1979, the Hip Society in 1982, and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons in 1985. Dr. Sledge was appointed to the Institute of Medicine in 1992.

Upon stepping away from his clinical work, Dr. Sledge took charge of the Brigham and Women's Physician Organization. He would serve in this role for a further three years, before retiring fully in 1999.

Dr. Sledge married his wife Georgia (nee Kurrus) on April 13, 1957. They would be married for

more than 60 years and go on to have four children (Margaret, Claire, John and Matthew) and 12 grandchildren.

Clement Sledge will be remembered for his contributions to joint arthroplasty, foundational role in the growth and maturation of orthopaedic surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital. and contributions to research in the surgical management of rheumatoid arthritis, total knee replacement, and patient reported outcomes. His enduring legacy in these domains continues to resound in the present and undoubtedly will be remembered well into the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

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