

In Memoriam: Charles Bernard Carpenter

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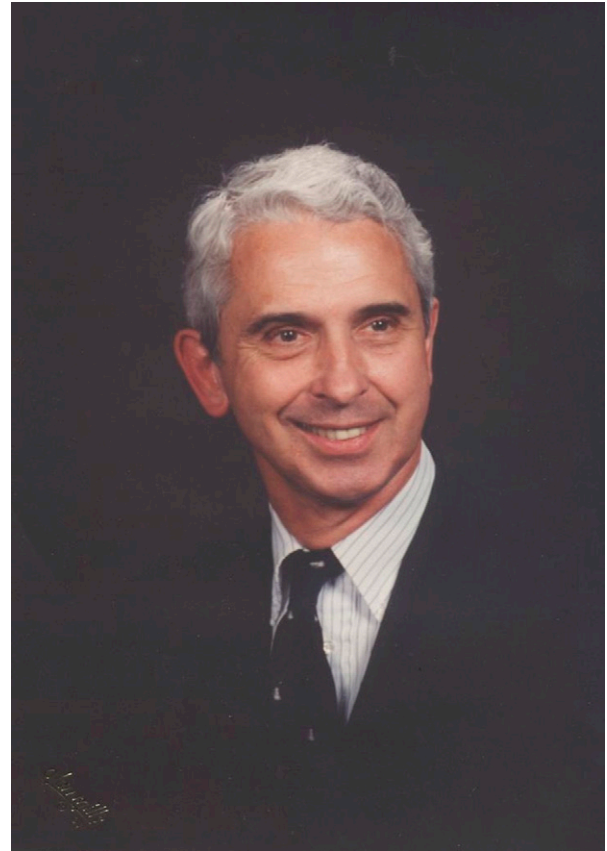
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Do not go where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

An authentic pioneer must be visionary, courageous, resilient, patient, and persistent. All of these noble qualities were embodied in the persona of Charles Bernard (“Bernie”) Carpenter, a true pathfinder in the field of transplantation and nephrology, who passed into the pages of history at age 78 after a long struggle with Alzheimer’s disease. Only a very few individuals have been dually responsible for the founding of a medical discipline and for contributing so munificently to its growth and maturation.

Bernie was born in Melrose, Massachusetts, in 1933, and remained a New Englander by nature and temperament. He possessed an inexhaustible curiosity, a calm and caring demeanor, and a dedication to the high ideals of scholarship, family, and friendship. After graduating from Dartmouth College (*summa cum laude*) and Dartmouth Medical School, he received his MD from Harvard Medical School in 1958. After a short sojourn at Cornell University Medical College and the Bellevue Hospital in New York for training in internal medicine, he served 2 years in the US Naval Medical Corps in Japan and then returned to Boston and the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital and Harvard Medical School in 1962, where he remained almost a half-century for his illustrious and highly productive career. At Harvard, he rose to full professor after 18 years, serving along the way as an investigator of the



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Howard Hughes Medical Institute from 1973 to 1980. Although he was director of the Tissue Typing and Immunogenetics Laboratories of the Brigham and Women’s Hospital for nearly 3 decades, these titles and accomplishments are pale reflections of his iconic status in our field.

Bernie, almost single-handedly, created the discipline of transplant medicine. In the heady, early days of organ transplantation using azathioprine and glucocorticoids, and under the guidance of John Merrill and Joseph Murray, both seminal figures in the field of human organ transplantation, he became the main physician providing ongoing care for the first successful kidney transplants performed with immunosuppression in the dramatic period of 1962 to 1963—rightly called the dawn of organ allo-transplantation modified by drugs. Bernie excelled in the provision of compassionate care at a time when the outcome of the kidney transplantation was not as well understood as it is now. The small initial brotherhood of patients with successful kidney grafts idolized him for his cool confidence radiating a much appreciated reassurance for their uncertain lives. He quickly expanded his horizons beyond the limits of the bedside to the laboratory, where he also began a life-long quest to uncover

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the secrets of allograft acceptance. It was this conjunction of clinical and laboratory science that brought Bernie to posterity's pinnacle.

He also became the mentor for a phenomenal succession of supremely talented and gifted individuals, whose own contributions firmly advanced the discipline of transplant medicine. His disciples recall the easy spirit of cooperation and openness, the quiet acceptance of young investigators struggling with unfamiliar technology and the growing intricacies of transplantation immunology, and most of all, the overriding sense of integrity, honesty, openness, and critical exposition that he brought to all endeavors.

Bernie became known as the "big man who made all feel bigger" when they were under his spell. Trainees and young faculty flocked to Bernie and the laboratories of the Brigham and Women's Hospital in large numbers (over 60) knowing that their careers as clinicians and scientists in the newly minted field of transplantation immunology, immunogenetics, and clinical transplantation would be nurtured by an inspirational mentor of unmatched intellect, balanced by wit and wisdom and a willingness to listen. Their decisions to come under this guidance were rewarded by success and recognition in their own right. Bernie's light burnt even more brightly on account of his unqualified dedication to his intellectual offspring. By the end of his active career, Bernie had trained a great majority of the new leaders of transplantation medicine in the United States and in many foreign countries.

Together with his colleagues and trainees, he published over 380 scientific papers or about one per month over a span of 40 years. It is difficult to select key contributions from such a diverse and prodigious record of clinical and basic investigation; he made major contributions to the immunogenetics of transplantation and tissue typing, indirect allo-recognition, oral tolerance, mechanisms of allograft rejection, immunosuppression (chemical and biologic), complement metabolism in disease, and many others. Bernie and the talented group of co-investigators that surrounded him touched virtually every critical issue in human and experimental tissue transplantation.

Naturally, such an exceptional career would bring many accolades and awards. He was elected to the American Society for Clinical Investigation and to the Association of American Physicians, and served as the president of the American Society of Transplant Physicians (now the American Society of Transplantation). Bernie, along with Ronald Guttman, Lawrence Hunsicker, and Terry Strom, helped found this major society representing the nascent field of transplantation medicine. He received the prestigious John P. Peters Award from the

American Society of Nephrology and the David Hume Award from the National Kidney Foundation. His colleagues and friends throughout the world endowed a Carpenter Transplantation Fellowship at the Brigham and Women's Hospital on the occasion of his retirement from active academic life. He retired officially in 2005 but the ties to Boston were so strong he did not move to his postacademic hamlet in New Hampshire until 2007.

Despite all of these achievements, Bernie remained the humble and generous humanist that endeared him to all that were fortunate to know or work with him. He sought no limelight and commanded no audience. He was content to follow his instincts, to persist in his curiosity, and to guide others through the tedium and disappointments that can crop up in a research career. His ability to succeed in all of these tasks can be attributed in large part his devotion to family and the support he received from his loving wife, Sandra, and to the joy they experienced in witnessing the growth and successes of their sons, Brad and Scott, and their four grandchildren, Michaela, Emma, Andres, and Annette. Add to this the wonderful ambience of New England and the warmth of their home in Weston, summers at a cottage on Angle Pond in New Hampshire and later a new home at Bar Harbor in Maine, the numerous informal gatherings with a large coterie of close friends, and their travels to many countries as an ambassador of transplantation science, and one can appreciate the richness of Bernie's and Sandra's life together. His last years, like his entire illustrious career, were devoted to the pursuit of new knowledge, as he became a volunteer for a large clinical trial in Alzheimer's disease at the Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Bernie's career over time is testimony to the truth of the observations of Socrates and Emerson that the examined life is the one worth living. Instinct, intuition, imagination, and reflection guided Bernie during his long and productive career, a career epitomized by a passion to understand the unknown. No biologic mystery intimidated his inquisitiveness. His *aequinimitas* as a teacher brought out the best in his students. His legacy survives in the knowledge he advanced and in the accomplishments of his academic progeny. He will be sorely missed but not forgotten.

All that is beautiful drifts away, like the waters.

William Butler Yeats

DISCLOSURES

None.