The Randall B. Griepp Honorary Paper

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Dr Griepp was the founding director of the Aortic Symposium (Figure 1). By way of recognizing his contributions to the symposium and the field of thoracic aortic surgery, The American Association of Thoracic Surgery is instituting the policy of distinguishing the best abstract submitted to the Aortic Symposium as “The Randall B. Griepp Honorary Paper.”

Dr Griepp received a Bachelor of Science degree from the California Institute of Technology and a Medical Doctor degree from Stanford University Medical School. He went on to complete a medical internship at Bellevue Hospital in New York City, where he met his wife, Eva Botstein Griepp, a pediatric cardiologist, who collaborated on much of the laboratory and clinical work throughout Dr Griepp’s career and who edited all of the abstracts and manuscripts for the Aortic Symposium series.

Dr Griepp returned to Stanford in July of 1968, where he completed general surgical and cardiac surgical training under Dr Norman E. Shumway. These were exciting times in cardiac surgery and at Stanford in particular, as Dr Shumway had performed his first heart transplant, the world’s forth, on January 6, 1968. Dr Griepp performed his first heart transplant on January 1, 1970, and for many years that patient was the longest heart transplant survivor, surviving 26 years. Along with Dr Edward B. Stinson, Dr Griepp led the Stanford heart transplant team during the early 1970s, the formative years of cardiac transplantation, when only several institutions worldwide were actively developing cardiac transplant programs. During this period, Dr Griepp was first author of a number of key publications that helped establish heart transplantation as a viable, reliable clinical option; he also participated with Dr Peer Portner on the development of mechanical assist devices.

Drs Shumway and Griepp shared a research interest in the application of hypothermia to cardiac surgery. In 1973, Drs Griepp, Stinson, and Shumway described the protective effect of topical hypothermia for protection of the human heart during cardiac surgery. In 1975, using surface cooling and cardiopulmonary bypass to induce hypothermia, Dr Griepp published a technique for total arch replacement using deep hypothermic circulatory arrest at 12°C to 18°C, which reduced cerebral metabolic demand to tolerable levels and provided a bloodless operative field in which to work. The approach became the standard for more than 2 decades.

Having been an attending cardiac surgeon on Dr Shumway’s service for several years, in 1976 Dr Griepp simultaneously completed a chief residency in General Surgery and then was recruited to become Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the State University of New York, Brooklyn. Shortly after moving to New York, with the untimely illness of Dr Samuel L. Kountz, Dr Griepp became Chairman of Surgery for the State University Hospital and Kings County Hospital. During this period, Dr Griepp teamed up with Dr M. Arisan Ergin. They continued the work on arch replacement using deep hypothermia, and the partnership proved enormously productive over the coming 25 years in terms of clinical and academic output, particularly in the field of aortic surgery.

In 1985, Dr Griepp became Professor and Chairman of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, where he built a world-renowned program and developed a busy clinical practice in pediatric cardiac surgery and aortic surgery. Dr Griepp’s curriculum vitae is extensive, but a number of his many contributions to aortic surgery can be categorized into 5 broad areas: natural history of thoracic aortic aneurysms, hypothermic circulatory arrest, safe parameters for selective cerebral perfusion, arch...
replacement using a trifurcated graft, and spinal cord protection, including elaboration of the spinal collateral network model.

Dr. Griepp trained 32 chief residents and many fellows in cardiothoracic surgery, 13 of whom became Chairman or Chiefs of Service at their respective institutions. He served as director of the Aortic Symposium series from 1988 to 2012.

References