

LIFELINE

**Tom Starzl**

During his surgical residency in the 1950s, Tom Starzl began transplantation experiments with liver (and other organs), a diversion that became a lifetime passion as the fantasies transformed into reality.

Who was your most influential teacher?

Horace W Magoun, a neurophysiologist who taught me that it was more important to grasp the whole problem than to understand every detail.

Which aspect of your work gives you most pleasure?

Finding better ways to resolve difficult clinical problems, and then generating the strategy to then cases.

Which single medical advance would benefit most people?

Effective population control. This is more a social than a medical problem.

Which patient has had most effect on your work?

The first kidney recipient whose severe allograft rejection under azathioprine was reversed with high-dose prednisone. He has perfect renal function 34 years later. The prediction that the same thing could be accomplished with other organs proved correct.

What is your unrealised ambition?

To go on foot to the North Pole and, of course, to get back.

Which alternative profession would you have liked to pursue?

Author or journalist.

What would be your advice to a newly qualified doctor?

Never take a job for money or, if you do, make the tenure short.

Who or what do you most admire, and why?

My father and the surgeons William R Waddell and Henry T Bahnson, because of their shared character and integrity.

What was your biggest mistake?

There have been too many whoppers to settle on one.

JABS & JIBES



To the angels on horseback

There's a great deal about horses I don't like: their goofy teeth; the sentimentality they inspire in daughters; and their glee at poohing in public. I have mounted in earnest only twice.

The first was quite a small, marmalade-coloured horse. The advance party of trekking girls who had reported the emergency argued if Tiger was the mount of choice, "He's fast", "But he doesn't like..." pigtailed objected (later I found out it was "men"). Fast—that was the ticket. I'd driven like the wind to meet the riders at a viewpoint on the mountain. "You can ride, doctor?" Well, I'd seen western films. I was hoisted into the saddle, medical bag wedged where the rescued heroine should be. Pigtailed, on a grey, set a cracking pace. So did Tiger in pursuit, once I recalled that the accelerator is shaking reins loose and some encouraging "gid-dyups".

In the distance where a cairn defaced the lumbar declivity of our recumbent mountain (*Carn ingli*—the mountain of angels—peaks to her raised head, neolithic fortifications her hairdo), pigtailed dismounted to herald the emergency service's arrival. Tiger was in full flight. Where was the brake? Ah, yes, you pull in the reins and "whoohay!". Tiger, stopped; I catapulted over the horse's neck. The emergency service was bruised but intact; the emergency was dead—overcome at finding the cairn to be on a new lay-line, he had collapsed in his wife's arms. Just as well, maybe; the medical bag had burst open and emergency equipment was swimming in broken eggs, a reward from a farm visit. Tiger was sniggering and scoffing an omelette of otoscope, dressings, blood bottles, swabs, and my favourite stethoscope.

A while later, the discrete borough within which I practised elected me Mayor. Always discover the unwritten ordinances of any public-service undertaking. I did not. On a day in August,

the Mayor leads the Corporation in beating its bounds. "Always on horseback?". "It's tradition". Fruitless to argue with tradition. I ordered a docile charger from the Castle and took instruction. "Your knees" pigtailed screeched in desperation, "grip them". After three eventful outings, I was considering a diplomatic attack of hayfever, but my funk was overcome by anticipation of the afternoon's highlight—at the mountain viewpoint, against a venerable boundary stone, some boys were to be beaten by the mayor, so that they would remember their limits.

Knees gripped, I led the parade in regalia—a scarlet robe trimmed with rabbit, lace ruff, gilt chain, kid gloves, and a rather fetching cocked hat. We paraded along the estuary and round the lime kilns. When it came to winding uphill, it became apparent that

the horse was not happy with its mount. I gripped on until in sight of the expectant crowd at the viewpoint, when the beast rid itself of me with a convulsive squirm, rear, and whinney.

I took a stick to two boys with rather more vim than the ritual required (they had laughed, you see). Honour was satisfied. The beast reckoned so too, and was shamelessly obedient for the rest of the tour. At the square pigtailed reclaimed her crush, fretfully examining it for any damage. Exaggerations of my tumbles (not, needless to say, of my pluck) amused carousers in the public house.

But both exploits were foolhardy. In my time in the borough, two people I knew were seriously injured when thrown from horseback. One was irretrievably brain-damaged, and the other died. Trust nothing, children, with four legs even less than with two—unless, of course, you are between the ages of nine and fifteen and have pigtailed. And then, please, *always* wear a safety helmet.

John Bignall

