

In Memoriam:

Robert L. Replogle, MD

(1931–2016)

The cardiothoracic surgery community is saddened by the loss of Robert L. Replogle, MD, of Chicago, who died on 9 May 2016, at age 84. Dr. Replogle was an outstanding surgeon, researcher, and educator who will be remembered especially for his remarkable leadership abilities.

Born in 1931, Bob Replogle grew up in Clear Lake, Iowa, and graduated from high school there. In 1949, he entered Cornell College, in Mount Vernon, Iowa. Before he could complete his studies, the Korean War broke out, and he was called to serve in the Navy (1951–1954). While working at the Naval Research Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, he developed an interest in medicine.

After being discharged from the Navy, Dr. Replogle entered Harvard Medical School, where he became the last trainee of Robert E. Gross, MD, a pioneering pediatric surgeon. During Dr. Replogle's first year at Harvard, he met his future wife, Carol, whom he married a year later. After graduating from medical school, he served as an intern at the University of Minnesota, where he was introduced to heart surgery by Drs. Owen Wangensteen and C. Walton Lillehei. Later, he did a 2nd internship at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston, and he completed residencies at Massachusetts General Hospital and Boston Children's Hospital. During this period, he created the Replogle tube, a double-lumen drainage catheter that is still used today in infants who have esophageal atresia. After completing his training in general and cardiothoracic pediatric surgery, he joined the faculty of Boston Children's Hospital.

In 1967, Dr. Replogle became a pediatric surgeon and faculty member at the University of Chicago. He began as head of the congenital heart surgery program and subsequently became division chief. To expand his surgical skills and knowledge, he sought additional training in adult cardiac surgery at the Cleveland Clinic. Thereafter, he devoted his career to performing open-heart surgery in both adult and pediatric patients. During the course of his career, he directed the cardiac surgery programs at Michael Reese Hospital, Ingalls Memorial Hospital, and Columbus Hospital, in Chicago. He was also interested in medical research, particularly involving the microcirculation, and in educating the next generation of clinical investigators. Over the years, he mentored a number of younger surgeons and contributed to more than 100 scientific publications.

One of Dr. Replogle's defining qualities was his remarkable leadership ability, which was evident in both his professional and his personal endeavors. His involvement with the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) began with the organization's inaugural meeting, in 1964. Over the years, he used his creativity and foresight to advance the specialty of cardiac surgery and ensure the best care for heart patients. His many contributions included helping to establish the STS Education and Research Foundation



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(now known as the Thoracic Surgery Foundation), the STS National Database, the STS-PAC, and CTSnet. He also promoted the global standardization of training and certification programs for cardiothoracic surgery. In 1996–1997, he served as president of the STS.

On a more personal level, Dr. Replogle used his leadership skills to resolve an issue close to his heart. His brother, Ralph, had cerebral palsy and needed specialized care, which was difficult to obtain in rural Iowa. Robert sought to improve the support system for families facing similar circumstances. In the early 1960s, he worked with members of his hometown community to found an organization to provide housing and assistance for adults with disabilities. Now known as Opportunity Village, this organization provides services to more than 600 people from over 30 communities.

I first met “Rep” when we were both young. He had a genius for enjoying life through close friendships, witty conversation, and a range of interests that included computers, photography, travel, scuba diving, fast cars, and fine wines. At the risk of seeming irreverent, I hope that his heavenly estate includes at least as fine an offering of superb wines as the ones he collected while on earth.

Most of all, Robert was devoted to his family. Survivors include his wife, Carol, as well as his children—Robert Jr., Jennifer, and Edith—and 9 grandchildren. My deepest sympathy is extended to his family, colleagues, and friends.

*Denton A. Cooley, MD,
Founder and President Emeritus,
Texas Heart Institute,
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