

A Tribute to
Robert A. Good, MD, PhD, DSc
May 21, 1922 – June 13, 2003

By Jolan Walter MD, PhD and Richard F. Lockey, MD



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Following are some comments on Robert A. Good, MD, PhD, by Jolan Walter, MD, PhD, Robert A. Good Endowed Chair, Division of Allergy and Immunology, Department of Pediatrics, University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine:

Dr. Robert A. Good is regarded as the founder of modern immunology. His career started in his home state, Minnesota, where he published several seminal papers in the field of clinical immunology. In 1962, he documented the importance of the thymus gland, the role of which was elusive at that time. In 1965, he, along with Max D. Cooper, MD, published the first paper describing the thymus and bursal lymphoid system in chicken in the journal *Nature*. This work served as a foundation for distinguishing the development sites of the adaptive immune system (T and B cells) recognized and published the role of tonsils. In 1968, Dr. Good performed the first successful human bone marrow transplant between persons who were not identical twins.

The recipient was a 4- month boy from a family where 11 children had died secondary to severe combined immunodeficiency.

Dr. Good aspired to cure cancer by understanding the immune system. In 1972 he moved to NYC and became the president of the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research and by 1973, he was on the cover of Time magazine with the heading: “Toward control of CANCER”. His work on immune therapy for cancer, entitled “Conquest of Cancer Program”, was part of the War on Cancer endorsed by President Nixon. His continued research on the human immune system has resulted with 2,136 papers 1945-2005 (60 years) along with numerous awards including the Albert Lasker Award for Clinical Medical Research. Later in his career in 1985, he was invited by Dr. Andor Szentivanyi who was Dean at USF and an internationally known asthma researcher.

Dr. Good became the Physician-in-Chief at the All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida and was an active leader in the department of Pediatrics at MCOM. He placed Florida and USF on the map in the rapidly evolving translational science of immunology. Quoting his wife, Professor Bibi Day: “Dr. Good saw the best in people, empowered them, and stimulated them to give their best and gave credit where it was due. He was a magnificent and indefatigable professor, scientist, mentor, role model, humanitarian and friend and he is sorely missed, but not forgotten.

Following are some comments on Robert A. Good, MD, PhD, by Richard F. Lockey, MD, Distinguished University Health Professor, Division of Allergy and Immunology, Department of Internal Medicine, University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine:

Robert A. Good, MD, PhD, DSc, the father of modern clinical immunology, passed away on June 13, 2003. Dr. Good was a “compleat” physician (as in *The Compleat Angler*, 1653, by Issac Walton), inspiring academician and a renowned researcher. He began his work more than 50 years prior to his death. In 1944 he defined experimentally the immunologic function of the plasma cell as the antibody reproducing cell. His research achievements include discovery of the function of the thymus and definition of two distinct major cellular components of the immune system. He performed the first successful bone marrow transplant in the world in 1968 at the University of Minnesota. Everyone whomever associated with Dr. Good learned about “experiments of nature”, and much of his work was designed to imitate what nature, by intent or default, has done.

In 1973, Dr. Good became President and Director of the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research and Director of Research at Memorial Hospital in New York where he committed 10 years to these institutions. He developed the first bone marrow transplantation program at Memorial Hospital. The cover story of the March 19, 1973 edition of TIME Magazine honored Dr. Good and featured the article “Toward Control of Cancer.” In 1982, he joined the Oklahoma Health Sciences Center as a member and the Head of the Cancer Research Program, Professor of Pediatrics,

Research Professor of Medicine and Professor of Microbiology and Immunology. Dr. Good joined All Children's Hospital and the University of South Florida College of Medicine as Physician-in-Chief in 1985 and directed the Hospital's Division of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. He developed the hospital's first Bone Marrow Transplantation Unit and clinical programs in pediatric allergy/immunology, pediatric rheumatology and pediatric HIV. In his 18 years of service to All Children's Hospital, Dr. Good and his research teams received millions of dollars in federal and private research grants. More than 300 physicians and scientists were trained or mentored over the past 50 years under his guidance, of which greater than 200 are now professors or department chairs at institutions throughout the world.

At the University of South Florida, College of Medicine, Dr. Good held the titles of Distinguished University Professor of Pediatrics, Medical Microbiology and Immunology, and Medicine. He also served as President of the St. Petersburg-based Children's Research Institute. An endowed chair in pediatric immunology through the Eleanor Dana Charitable Trust was created in honor of Dr. Good at the University and All Children's Hospital. His research included the influence of nutrition on longevity, immunity, health span and disease of aging, fundamental and practical aspects of bone marrow and stem cell transplantation, and other forms of cellular engineering. Dr. Good's work with immunology is only one aspect of his lifetime devotion to research. He received 13 honorary degrees from academic institutions throughout the world and over 100 awards. The latter included the Albert Lasker Clinical Medical Research Award, The Gairdner Foundation Award in 1970, and the Order of the Sacred Treasure Gold and Silver Star conferred by his Excellency the Emperor of Japan. Dr. Good was also a member of the National Academy of Sciences and Charter Member of the Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences. He was President of many distinguished and learned societies including the American Association of Immunologists and American Society for Investigative Pathology (formerly The American Society for Investigative Pathology). He authored or coauthored more than 2,000 publications and wrote or edited 50 books.

Dr. Good's legacy lives on in his innovative research, the patients who live because of such research, and most especially in his trainees, colleagues, and collaborators. Several things stand out in my mind about Dr. Good: first, he was a scholar and a gentleman; second he was one of the few individuals who truly understood the great spectrum of molecular biology, basic immunology, and clinical medicine and immunology and third; I will never forget all his wonderful summaries of conferences that I attended with him. I always told the students and the residents, if you listen to Dr. Good's summary, you will understand the nuts-and-bolts of what is the most important information presented during the conference.

When Dr. Good came to the University of South Florida and All Children's Hospital in 1985, one of my colleagues asked how that would influence my stature at the University. I replied, "What do you do when God is gracing you with the presence of a world-renowned genius? I will do whatever he asks me to do". Our relationship was one of mutual admiration, collaboration, collegiality and friendship. He was a great friend and I truly miss him.

Dr. Robert Good's legacy lives on. It is at the University of South Florida and the many Universities and conferences at which he spoke, received distinguished honorary degrees and worked. It is living in the innumerable children and adults who are alive because of his research and all those whom he taught, influenced and those who continue the quest to cure primary and secondary immunodeficiency diseases.

I would be extremely lax if I also did not mention my good friend, Dr. Noorbibi Day-Good, Bob's wife. Dr. Day-Good is an outstanding renowned scientist in her own right, especially in complement and immunodeficiency diseases. Behind every great woman is a great man. That was Robert Good. Behind every great man is a great woman. That is Bibi Day. Bibi served in many ways as the gray eminence for my dear friend and colleague as he grew older. Bibi is appreciated for all of her great accomplishments and all that she continues to do for medicine and as Bob's loving wife and friend.

Dr. Bob Good was born on May 21, 1922 in Crosby, Minnesota. He vowed to become a doctor at age six when his father died of cancer. He attended the University of Minnesota, overcoming a polio-like disease in his junior year and continued his career at the University's Medical School. He received his bachelor's degree in 1944, MB in 1946 and was awarded his PhD and MD in 1947, the first time the University awarded dual degrees in a single ceremony. He is survived by his wife, Noorbibi K. Day-Good, PhD, his five children, two stepchildren and 17 grandchildren.

Dr. Good was a true intellectual giant who influenced and led the field of clinical immunology into the 21st century. He was an inspiration to all of us who worked with him and is missed by all of us.

The Robert A. Good Honor Society (RGHS) was introduced by the University of South Florida Morsani College of Medicine April 19, 2017 as an initiative to recognize medical students, faculty and alumni who have been notably successful in scholarly endeavors. Following is a link which provides more information: <https://health.usf.edu/medicine/mdprogram/rise/rghs>.

The Robert A. Good Endowed Lecture Series was established in October 2000 to support a lecture series in immunology in Dr. Good's name. This year, this Lecture Series will be used to support the attendance of the Federation of Clinical Immunology Societies (FOCIS) Annual Meeting and a plenary session entitled: "Cell and Gene Therapy", San Francisco, October 28 – 31, 2020. It is anticipated that the Robert A. Good Endowed Lecture Series will also support the 2021 annual meeting in a similar manner.

Below, Dr. Robert A. Good, MD, PhD with his wife, Dr. Noorbibi Day, PhD, circa 2002, at the Annual Division of Allergy/Immunology, Department of Internal Medicine, Christmas/Holiday party. Both Drs. Day and Good were world experts in their respective areas of academic medicine, and both were members of the Division of Allergy and Immunology, Departments of Pediatrics & Internal Medicine, for over twenty years.

