

Annual Stubbs Lecture, Surgical Section of the NMA—A Tribute to Dr. King

Eddie L. Hoover, MD
Buffalo, New York

Key words: Frederick W. Stubbs ■ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ■ Charles Brunnicardi, MD ■ tuberculosis ■ thoracic surgery

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In 1941, the Surgical Section of the NMA (SS-NMA) began an “Annual Oration in Surgery” intended to honor an outstanding colleague and make black medical history better known to the membership. The first three such lectures were given by Dr. Ulysses Grant Dailley of Chicago, Dr. John A. Kenney, editor in chief of *Journal of the National Medical Association* and Dr. Charles R. Drew. The fourth lecture was given by Dr. Frederick W. Stubbs (*JNMA*, 1942). Stubbs died suddenly at 3:45 p.m. on Sunday, February 9, 1947 at the age of 40. Drew was chairman of the surgical section in 1947 and, in his address to the section in August 1947 in Los Angeles, suggested that the Annual Lecture in Surgery be renamed the Frederick Douglass Stubbs Lecture.

Stubbs was born in Wilmington, DE in 1906 and was a magna cum laude graduate of Dartmouth College and a cum laude graduate of the Harvard Medical School in 1931, and the first African American elected to Alpha Omega Alpha at Harvard. He began his internship in surgery in 1931 as “the first black man appointed to the house staff of any major teaching hospital in the United States.” He went to the Douglass Memorial Hospital in Philadelphia to complete his residency in general surgery in 1933, which was his first formal experience in a Negro institution. In 1937, he was accepted for a year of training in thoracic surgery at Sea View Hospital in New York City, which afforded him the moniker as the “only trained Negro thoracic surgeon in the United States” at the time. In his short career, he became an expert in the field of surgery for tuberculosis.

Since its inception, this lecture has been given by the most notable figures in American surgery, and for the past 25 years, most have been professors and chairs of surgery at their institutions. This year’s Stubbs’s lecturer, selected by the section chairman, Dr. W. Lynn Weaver, has a special significance for me personally. He graduated with honors from

Johns Hopkins University in chemistry and received his MD from Rutgers School of Medicine. I first met him at the New York Hospital-Cornell University School of Medicine in New York City when he was a research fellow and I was a junior faculty member. In 1980, I joined the faculty at Downstate and in 1983 he joined us there as a research resident and, subsequently, a resident and chief resident in the surgery residency program under Dr. Bernard M. Jaffe. He received the Outstanding Teacher Award at UKCLA three years in a row as a faculty member there before moving on to Baylor College of Medicine, where he received the Gene K. Guinn Outstanding Faculty Award and the Fulbright and Jaworski Faculty Excellence Award in Educational Leadership. In April of 1999, he was named DeBaakey/Bard professor and chairman of the Michael E. DeBaakey Department of Surgery at the Baylor College of Medicine, where he remains to this day one of the premier academic surgeons in the world. He has published more than 181 publications, 27 book chapters and 114 abstracts. His research interests include the molecular engineering of pancreatic islets cells for transplant, pancreatic and breast cancer, minimally invasive and molecular surgery. He is the editor in chief of *Schwartz’s Principles of Surgery*, one of the most widely utilized textbooks in surgery in the world.

He drove to Dallas from Houston last August and spent the entire day with the section with his wife Melissa and their two boys, Isaac and Jackson. He proceeded to deliver one of the most profound and provocative lectures of all times, weaving a XXX of how the leadership principles of MLK had guided him through dark days of doubt and uncertainty and how these principles applied to the discipline of surgery. At the conclusion of his presentation, it was unanimously agreed by the Executive Council of the section that he be invited to prepare his presentation in the form of a manuscript for publication in *JNMA*. Herein, the SS-NMA proudly presents this outstanding oration entitled, “The Leadership Principles of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and Their Relevance to Surgery.” I might add that Dr. Brunnicardi’s hobbies include spending time with his family, music (guitar) and golf. I also have it on good authority that had a last-minute substitution not occurred, the world of academic surgery would have lost Chuck to the movie industry as the lead actor in the major motion picture sequel to “Saturday Night Fever”. ■