the elitist view of the certificate, several hundred surgeons practicing vascular surgery in nonacademic environments were denied admissibility to the vascular surgery certification process. Each situation had to be reviewed in detail by the credentials committee of the board. Much of this process occurred during Dr Organ’s chairmanship, and he insisted on maintaining the objectivity and fairness of the review process with a detailed review of each case. In retrospect, the elitist view of the vascular surgery certificate was probably inappropriate, but had it been viewed any other way, it is unlikely it would have been approved by the board at the time.

The final contentious issue taken on by Claude during his chairmanship was the issue of allowing doctors of osteopathy to enter the certification process. Since the inception of the board, certification had been limited to doctors holding an MD degree. By 1984, 17 of the 23 member boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties had accepted doctors with DOs for certification, and the federal government had mandated that military residencies must accept doctors with DOs into residency programs. Doctors with DOs had begun to apply for certification, and the board had to confront the issue.

Legal opinions were obtained from Mr Ewing as well as 2 other law firms, and all were in agreement that the board could no longer exclude doctors with DOs. Dr Organ therefore chose to present this issue to the board in January 1985 at his first meeting as chairman. The proposal to allow doctors with DOs who had completed an allopathic residency into the certification process was approved by a 2:1 vote.

Claude’s formal legacy includes outstanding leadership in difficult causes; advocacy for the less entitled; honesty, integrity, and fairness in all his activities; and a dedication to the highest professional ideals of surgery. To those who knew him well, his informal legacy is equally important and includes warm friendships, subtle and infectious good humor, incisive observations, intense loyalty to friends, and a very personal interest in seeing young surgeons of all types succeed. His service to the board was outstanding in all ways, his friendships and warm relations with directors past and present were equally so, and he will be remembered with extraordinary fondness and admiration.

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Claude Organ, Jr, MD

Bernard F. Ribeiro, CBE, PRCS

Dr Claude Organ’s international reputation was awesome. He traveled widely and was always welcome in the four corners of the globe. His many friends in Australia, Africa, Asia, and the United Kingdom remember the thoughtfulness with which he assessed the problems presented to him and the quiet authority with which he gave his opinion. He could be direct, but he had an engaging way of using humor to sweeten the pill.

It was clear that throughout his career, Dr Organ set high standards for himself and his residents, and, despite his belief in affirmative action to assist African American students to gain access to medical school, he would treat all of his trainees in a like manner. Ethnicity was not a good reason for failing to reach the standards set by him.

Dr Organ was a much-loved visitor to the United Kingdom. In 1999, he was invited to tour England, Scotland, and Wales as the British Journal of Surgery Traveling Fellow for the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland, London, England. His task was to review our surgical training, our examinations, and the role of women in surgery. He presented a detailed and incisive report to the Association of Surgeons in Cardiff, Wales. In 2000, he received the honorary fellowship of the association. In 2001, he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, London, and in 2002, he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Dr Organ was a man with tremendous insight born of years of experience. His wonderful use of words was derived from a sound classical foundation and evolved into a memorable list of quotable quotes. When describing the difference between general surgeons and specialists, he observed: “Why is heparin so effective from midnight to 7 AM?” and “Humility in surgery is only 1 bad case away.”

On behalf of his many friends in the United Kingdom and around the world, we pay tribute to his great leadership and vision for surgery, which transcends all of the continents and has its basis in the maintenance of the highest standards of surgery.
Dr Claude Organ was endowed with extraordinary gifts. Among them were those of intellect, friendship, leadership, integrity, faith, and the capacity to give of himself. The Gospel of Luke (12:48) states: “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, they will ask the more.” Claude Organ never faltered in the fulfillment of the covenant represented in this citation. His peers asked him to assume responsibilities for leadership in diffuse roles—surgical educator, chairman of the American Board of Surgery, Philadelphia, Pa, president of the American College of Surgeons, Chicago, Ill, editor of Archives of Surgery, and international “ambassador,” to mention some positions that he filled with distinction. Particularly noteworthy was his role as a mentor to young surgeons from all backgrounds, to whom he gave unstintingly of his time with sage advice and counsel. This resulted in a legacy that will long endure.

Claude Organ was proud of his heritage and deserves major credit for the emergence of an increasingly large number of outstanding African American surgeons, particularly noteworthy in academic surgery. He was the “godfather” of the Society of Black Academic Surgeons.

Although I had known Claude for many years, our friendship matured during the 1980s at the time of our years of synchronous service as directors of the American Board of Surgery. Claude provided leadership as a director and, subsequently, as chairman of the board during a time when several important initiatives were undertaken—restructuring of the board to reduce size and create 1 class of directors, issuance of certificates in vascular surgery and surgical critical care, restructuring of the certifying examination, and, potentially divisive, the admission for examination and certification of osteopathic physicians who had successfully completed a residency in a program approved by the Residency Review Committee for Surgery. His approach was one of quiet persuation, using irrefutable logic and leavening it with a generous dose of humor. He could also be the instigator of the unsuspected. One evening during a January business meeting of the active members of the board at the airport in Dallas, Tex, Claude decided that a few of us should take a cab into Dallas for an unannounced visit with Bill Fry, who was a senior member and former chairman of the board. When we arrived, Marty Fry welcomed us, but Bill was at a meeting. We awaited his return, at which time he was naturally surprised to find unexpected visitors. After a particularly pleasant interlude, we returned to the airport. This entire episode was vintage Claude, a thoughtful gesture of friendship for a respected colleague.

In recent years, Claude and I had frequent telephone conversations during which we settled all of the problems of surgery, at least to our satisfaction! Quite recently, I was particularly fortunate to have Betty and Claude visit me at my home in Pasadena, Calif, for a few days. He was his usual ebullient self. I fear that Betty had a bit of trouble inserting herself into our nonstop conversation that covered widely diverse subjects. This is a memory that I will always treasure.

A memoir regarding Claude could not be complete without mention of the Organ family. He and Betty were the parents of a remarkable group of children. Each is a unique personality, and each has achieved distinction in his or her chosen field of endeavor. They are indeed a remarkable tribute to their parents. Claude had great pride in their accomplishments, but this was never expressed in a boastful manner. That would not have been consistent with his character. Claude Organ made his professional mark in a variety of fields, but his legacy as a husband and a father is easily a match.

Well done, thy good and faithful servant.

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