



W.L. Winters Jr., M.D.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

William L. Winters Jr., M.D.

*Methodist DeBakey Heart & Vascular Center, Houston, Texas*

In this issue, we are privileged to publish the entire cardiovascular surgical experience of Dr. Jimmy F. Howell between the years of 1964 and 2004. He was but one of a remarkable cadre of cardiovascular surgeons trained by Dr. Michael E. DeBakey during that period and who worked at The Methodist Hospital in the academic cardiovascular surgical program at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM).

The next article by Dr. Henly describes the parallel development — the first of its kind at The Methodist Hospital and in Houston — of a private practice cardiovascular surgical team of surgeons all trained by the same Michael E. DeBakey, M.D. Simultaneously, the private practice cardiology community was enlarging faster than the academic cardiology community because of the existence of few and small local cardiology training programs until well into the 1970s. Thus was laid the groundwork for a strong private practice medical/surgical cardiovascular network working and competing in the same close clinical environment with the academic cardiovascular programs of BCM at Methodist. As one of our early colleagues commented, “That environment led to a natural grist between the private practice groups and the academic Baylor group.” On the one hand, there was the perceived view by some

of a more personal approach in patient care provided in the private practice scheme compared to the academic group. Yet in the setting of high tech demands and complex team requirements, Michael E. DeBakey placed no barrier to the development of a competing cardiovascular surgical team. They were, after all, his own trainees providing the competition. And let no one doubt that if they had not met the standards set by Dr. DeBakey, they would not have continued to practice and operate at The Methodist Hospital. So, as the bar stood high for cardiovascular surgeons, so it did for cardiologists as cardiology training programs at BCM, Methodist, and the Texas Heart Institute began to expand after the mid-1970s.

As academic surgeons and academic cardiologists absorbed some of each other's attributes, private practice cardiologists and surgeons increasingly became contributors to the academic programs by participating in the teaching and research opportunities. The side-by-side growth at The Methodist Hospital of both types of practices, tolerated by Dr. DeBakey, encouraged by The Methodist Hospital, and to a lesser degree, by Baylor College of Medicine, was unique in those early years of cardiac surgery.