Seiichi Ohmori Memorial Lecture

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Today I want to honor Dr. Seiichi Ohmori (Fig. 1), who was one of the very best plastic surgeons in Japan. His son, Kitaro, certainly has these same qualities, and is the author of one of the papers being given at this congress [7]. The previous Seiichi Ohmori honorary surgeons who have spoken to us have been Ulrich Hinderer of Madrid, Rudi Meyer from Lauenanne, and Salvador Castanares from Los Angeles.

Here in Turkey, this Congress should be aware of Charaf el-Din, the Turkish surgeon of six and a half centuries ago, the author of a handsome book printed in 1459, 116 years before the book on surgery written by the Huguenot, Ambroise Paré, in 1575 (Fig. 2). Ed-Din’s book is noted for its excellent illustrations of the various operations performed by him then, long, long ago [5].

To begin with, I will now take you back on a very brief tour of my family history and my own racial background. My maternal great-great-great-great grandfather, Johann von Bruguer, was a French Huguenot surgeon fighting in the Austrian army at the time of Napoleon’s advance on Milan in Italy. As a member of the Regiment von Stain, he was killed at the Battle of Milan defending that city from the advance of the Napoleonic troops in 1796.

My great-great-grandfather, Alexander von Bru- guier, was a French Huguenot surgeon who practiced in Potsdam in Prussia, in the middle of the 19th century (Fig. 3). My great-grandfather, Francis Bruguer, emigrated to the United States as a surgeon and arrived the month our Civil War began in 1861 (Fig. 4). At the end of the war he was on the extensive staff of General Ulysses S. Grant, when the surrender took place in Virginia in 1865.

My father was of German and English ancestry, and was a handsome, six-foot-two athlete, who broke many a woman’s heart because of his charm and athletic abilities (Fig. 5). He was a superb photographer as well as a superb artist in every technique and style, and probably would have succeeded had he confined himself to art and photography as his careers.

Here you see me as a small boy with my beautiful French-American mother teaching me how to swim (Fig. 6). I don’t seem to be too happy at the time. Here you see me standing on the beach of the Atlantic Ocean at the New Jersey shore at the age of two, looking for someone to play with (Fig. 7).

And I just discovered my oldest cousin, Jeanne Steenberg, of Dutch ancestry, who doesn’t seem to be concerned with my wandering right hand (Fig. 8). I had not yet studied the female anatomy, but this seems to be a good start.

As a small boy, a little bit older, after my mother’s continued interest in teaching me, I became a good swimmer and a moderately good athlete (Fig. 9).

My father’s cousin, “Uncle” Charles Uhl of Belgian ancestry, taught me trout fishing in the beautiful Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York in the early 1930s (Fig. 10).

Here is my first oil painting, at the age of nine, demonstrating the same talent for art that my father always showed and encouraged in me (Fig. 11).

As a gift for my fifth birthday, he had placed in my hands a Brownie box camera that I used until I acquired more elegant German and Japanese cameras.

This is my beautiful sister, Geraldine, at the age of 21, studying at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, on one of her numerous vacations in Cape Cod, at the seaside (Fig. 12).

In the army, during the war, I assisted Dr. Darrel T. Shaw at Halloran Hospital on Staten Island, New York, (Fig. 13). We treated thousands of the wounded, both American and German, brought over on troop ships after the breakthrough of the Allied armies in Normandy in 1944 [22].

In October 1944, at Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons Medical School, I met Dr. Jerome P. Webster (Fig. 14). He made me an immediate member of his department of plastic surgery, because I had assisted his very skillful pupil, Dr. Shaw. He asked me in that very first year, in 1944, to immediately accumulate for him all the information on skin homotransplantation, in order for me to eventually present this material, which I subsequently
did at a meeting of the American College of Surgeons five years later in October, 1949 [9].

Dr. Webster was the most skillful and artistic plastic surgeon I have ever assisted (Fig. 15). Here is a small baby whose face was burned during the winter of 1944, with complete, very deep, third-degree burns of every aspect and depth of his facial tissue, including his eyelids. A few delinquent young boys from the neighborhood his family lived in had thrown lighted matches into his baby carriage in the middle of a winter notated for its snowstorms.

Here are the superb results after only seven—and I emphasize only seven—operations in a four-year period by Dr. Webster that restored this boy to a normal appearance (Fig. 16). I assisted Dr. Webster in every one of these seven remarkable operations. That young boy is now a major member of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s project for a space-landing apparatus on Mars, one of the most advanced centers for space exploration in the United States.

In 1946 and 1947, I exchanged letters when I was only a medical student with Peter Medawar of England, the eventual Nobel Prize winner. He helped to answer some of the questions I had sent to him, showing my deep involvement at that time with studying the ultimate fate and behaviour of skin homografts (now called isografts) in humans.

In 1946, one year after the end of the war, I decided to visit Scandinavian hospitals by taking a Victory