Adrian Ede Flatt (1921–2017)

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This article commemorates Dr. Adrian Ede Flatt (*Figure 1*) for his contributions to the world of hand surgery, helping to form it into the field it is today. He died on October 14, 2017, at the age of 96.

Adrian Flatt was born in Frinton, England, on August 26, 1921. He attended medical school at Cambridge University and the London Hospital and trained in orthopedic surgery under Sir Reginald Watson-Jones and Sir Henry Osmond-Clarke.¹ After completing a year of plastic surgery training and participating in a tour of military service with the Royal Air Force, he returned to England to begin his career as a practicing hand surgeon in 1947. He was a founding member of the British Society for Surgery of the Hand. Years later, in 1956, he moved to the University of Iowa, establishing the first academic hand surgery unit in the USA (*Figure 2*). Dr. Flatt became a professor of anatomy and orthopedic surgery, as well as director of the Division of Hand Surgery at the University of Iowa.^{1,2} During his time in Iowa, Dr. Flatt directed major research programs in congenital anomalies and biomechanics of the hand. Furthermore, he did extensive clinical research in the realm of rheumatoid arthritis.³

After practicing at the University of Iowa for over 20 years, he took a position as the chief of surgery at the Norwalk Hospital and clinical professor at Yale University. In 1982, Dr. Flatt became the chief of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, Texas.^{1,2}

Dr. Flatt published extensively, including more than 170 articles in peer-reviewed medical journals and three books. He served as editor of *The Journal of Hand Surgery* from 1980 to 1991.¹ He was a visiting professor at many institutions. He served as president of the American Society for Surgery of the Hand, as well as president of

the Midwest Association of Plastic Surgeons.^{1,2} He received countless honors and awards, among which was election as an “International Pioneer of Hand Surgery.” In 1972, he was awarded the prestigious Kappa Delta Award—given to physician-scientists whose research in musculoskeletal disease or injury has ultimately led to advancement in patient care—for his work on the treatment of ulnar drift (*Figure 2*).^{2,4–6}

Dr. Flatt was monumental in educating many young orthopedic surgeons internationally. He trained 50 fellows in hand surgery, and these fellowships were restricted to board-qualified surgeons in general, plastic, or orthopedic surgery. He was named outstanding teacher of the year at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School for his anatomy teaching by the classes of 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2002.^{1,2}

In addition to his exemplary and influential contributions to orthopedic surgery as a “giant of hand surgery,” his legacy lives on through his casting and bronzing of famous hands and interesting personalities from around the world. This unique hobby began when he made molds of small hands with congenital problems to help him visualize and surgically plan his procedure (*Figure 3*). His collection expanded to molding and bronzing the hands of famous individuals, including seven former presidents, movie stars, celebrities, and famous athletes. In total, more than 120 hand molds were designed by Dr. Flatt. These are now proudly displayed at The Adrian E. Flatt, MD, Hand Collection located at the Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, Texas.²

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Figure 1. Dr. Adrian Flatt with his wife, Judith.

Figure 2. Dr. Adrian Flatt assessing and treating a patient with epidermolysis bullosa.

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Figure 3. Dr. Adrian Flatt with preoperative casts of patients with congenital hand deformities.

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