

DR. OSCAR "Bud" FRAZIER

FROM SMALL TOWN TO WORLD RENOWN

BY CONNIE LEWIS LEONARD
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JT FRAZIER



BEYOND SKILL, THIS HEART DOCTOR HAS HEART AND SOUL FOR HIS FELLOW MAN. DR. FRAZIER CONTINUES TO WORK TO BENEFIT MANKIND. HE DEVELOPED THE CONTINUOUS FLOW LEFT VENTRICULAR ASSIST DEVICE. HE HAS PERFORMED OVER 1,200 TRANSPLANTS.

The Best of the Best, The Country's Best Heart Doctors, America's Top Doctors, Living Legend Award, "Gift to Mankind" Award, The Best Medical Specialists in North America and Scientific Achievement Award are just a few of the accolades bestowed upon Dr. Oscar "Bud" Frazier.

But how does a man born and raised in small-town Stephenville become a world-renowned doctor, research scientist, inventor, speaker, and teacher? Beyond skill, this heart doctor has heart and soul for his fellow man. Dr. Frazier's parents modeled determination, excellence, and work ethic. Oscar H. Frazier Sr. served as a math teacher and track coach at Tarleton Junior College for forty years, beginning in 1925. Completed in 1977, the Oscar H. Frazier Memorial Track bears his name. Dr. Frazier's mother, Adele, taught high school English. Committed to preserving history, she once laid down on a brick road to prevent a paving project. His sister Marilyn became a librarian and lover of music, an overcomer with strength and grace.

Bud Frazier was an all-around athlete. In 1951, he was the best hitter in Little League. The next year, he had a 600 batting average. Since football is king in Texas, his baseball opportunities ended after Little League. The town of Minerals Wells carried more prestige than Stephenville, partly due to Fort Wolters, The Baker Hotel and Crazy Water. Mineral Wells High School noticed Bud's superior athletic ability, so they recruited Mrs. Adele Frazier to teach English so Bud could be their running back. After high school, he attended Tarleton before



going to the University of Texas as their most promising kicker and punter. He also ran track, qualifying for the mile-relay team. During spring training, an injury ended his football and track careers. Bud went on to major in history and literature, but after watching his parents spend endless hours grading papers, he knew he didn't want to follow their paths as teachers.

Bud enjoyed stories by Anton Chekhov and William Carlos Williams, both physicians by profession. While home on Easter break, he told his mother he thought he might go to medical school. She said he could do anything he wanted as long as he didn't lie, cheat, or steal, but she felt his soft heart might not be able to handle so much death at a time before cancer cures or many successful heart operations. He graduated with a BA degree from UT in 1963 and was admitted to Baylor College of medicine.

"Drafted into the Vietnam War, Dr. Frazier served as one of the last flight surgeons in a US Assault Helicopter combat unit from 1968-1970 where the people honored him with the Vietnamese Friendship Award."



"He developed the Continuous flow Left Ventricular Assist Device. He has performed over 1,200 transplants while simultaneously conducting research since 1976."

Each year, Baylor medical students were required to complete a research paper. A friend invited him to collaborate on writing about the future of artificial hearts. Each year, he researched and learned more about this cutting edge technology. Dr. Michael E. DeBakey, the most famous heart surgeon in the world at that time, proved ferocious to work for. Upon graduating with an MD in 1967, Dr. Bud Frazier received the coveted DeBakey Award for Outstanding Surgical Student.

Drafted into the Vietnam War, Dr. Frazier served as one of the last flight surgeons in a US Assault Helicopter combat unit from 1968-1970. After witnessing the sacrifice of so many young boys, he determined to continue working to save lives. He became friends with the director of the medical program in the county where the helicopter company was based. Dr. Frazier accompanied him once a week to small villages to treat patients, many suffering from malaria and tuberculosis. The people honored him with the Vietnamese Friendship Award.





Fulfilling his military service, Frazier returned to Houston to complete his surgical training under Dr. Michael E. DeBakey; Domingo Liotta, research scientist developing the first total artificial heart; and Dr. Denton A. Cooley, a master heart surgeon, whose talent made Houston the world's leading center for heart surgery at that time. While a medical student assisting Dr. DeBakey with open-heart surgery, a young patient's heart stopped. As long as Dr. Frazier massaged the heart, the man's eyes would open and make contact with Dr. Frazier. When he stopped massaging it, the heart stopped, and they couldn't get it started again. Dr. Frazier thought, "If the hand can keep him alive, we should be able to build a pump to do it."

Texas Heart Institute is the largest heart institute in the world, and The Cullen Research Lab is one of the world's leading research centers. Dr. Frazier spent about three-fourths of his time performing surgeries and one-fourth of his time researching. Some people are too gravely ill to wait for an available heart transplant, thus an artificial device is their only hope for survival. Dr. Frazier is a visionary who sees the future with clarity. Machines that not only keep people alive but give them quality of life is an idea so big "it forces us to redefine humanity."

As far as medicine has advanced during his career, Dr. Frazier continues to work to benefit mankind. He developed the Continuous-flow Left Ventricular Assist Device. He has

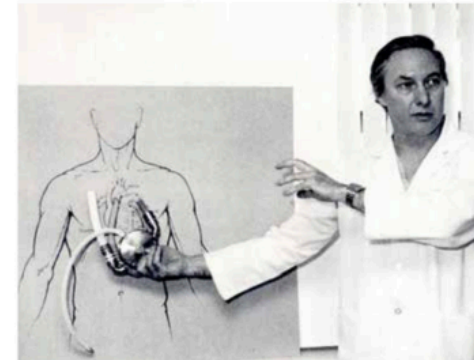
performed over 1,200 transplants while simultaneously conducting research since 197. What he has created will long outlive him, but he's not finished. Working on a total artificial heart for the past ten years, he has developed the best prototype so far. After experimenting and successfully implanting it in calves, the device should be ready this fall to implant in a human who has no other hope for survival.

Dr. Frazier's loving heart extends throughout the world. In 2019, while visiting China, he met young patients who were alive because of pumps he developed in his lab. Over 60,000 pumps implanted worldwide have kept hearts and souls alive. Dr. Frazier said, "It's extremely gratifying because otherwise they would be dead."

Dr. Frazier's heart beats for his family. He met his beautiful wife Rachel at UT where she was preparing for her career as an educator. They married in his first year at Baylor, and she taught elementary school while he completed his education and established himself in the medical community. Together they modeled a strong work ethic and family values. Their son Todd, who graduated from Juilliard School of Music, is an accomplished composer who leads arts in medicine programming at Houston Methodist Hospital. Their daughter Allison is a writer and Executive Life Coach. They have four cherished grandchildren.



"Dr. Frazier's big heart desires to give back to his hometown that gave him so many precious memories."



The family enjoys returning to Stephenville to reminisce about days gone by. Dr. Frazier maintains close relationships with friends and tells tales about his childhood in the quiet, pastoral setting where "You couldn't sin if you wanted to." Once, a former Baptist pastor destroyed a pinball machine with a sledgehammer to keep young Bud and his friends from the sin of gambling.

Dr. Frazier's big heart desires to give back to his hometown that gave him so many precious memories. The family is building The Frazier Conservatory to serve as a family retreat. It will house some of Dr. Frazier's beloved books, including poetry, Shakespeare, and history. The Conservatory will also be a place to promote art and music appreciation in a natural environment. **†ECL**

