

HISTORY OF MICROSURGERY: 5 GENERATIONS FROM 1957

By Julia K. Terzis, M.D., Ph.D.

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Dr. Julia Terzis has compiled this anthology of memoirs by microsurgeons. For at least 15 years, she has solicited contributions from microsurgeons from all over the surgical world. With her editing and a generous supplement of photographs from her own files, she has created an extraordinary group portrait of one of the great eras of surgical innovation.

Suitably, the first chapter is by Dr. Harry Buncke. According to the text, the chapter was written in 1992 and narrates the development of Dr. Buncke's initial ideas, instruments, experiments, and clinical cases. The story makes great reading and illustrates the characteristics of intuition, intelligence, skill, and tenacity exemplified by Dr. Buncke and his generation of pioneers. Dr. Buncke's recent death sadly underscores the timeliness of Dr. Terzis' project.

The text includes memoirs by over 100 other microsurgeons. These contributions are divided into groups of "generations", and this arrangement very effectively creates a historical pattern that shows the rich network of relationships that have energized and sustained these exemplary careers.

The cumulative story contained in this book depicts the great qualities that have made this group of people so productive. I have mentioned some of these characteristics already in reference to Dr. Buncke, but the composite portrait also glowingly highlights the ingenuity, skill, courage, compassion, and tenacity that have produced so many innovations related to the use of fine nylon sutures. Other features of this portrait are selflessness and generosity. Again and again, the authors describe the teaching, mentoring, and sharing of ideas that were so pervasive among these surgeons. Dr. Terzis does present in some detail two squabbles over precedence. While interesting to read, these two disputes highlight how very rare such disagreements have been. This cast of characters seems to have been more interested in promotion of progress rather than promotion of self.

I congratulate Dr. Terzis for assembling this great book. I recommend it heartily for its inspiring and readable content, and as time goes on, its invaluable potential as a reference.