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**Robert A. Good May 21, 1922–June 13, 2003**

Max D. Cooper

*J Immunol* 2003; 171:6318-6319; ;

doi: 10.4049/jimmunol.171.12.6318

<http://www.jimmunol.org/content/171/12/6318>

This information is current as of May 13, 2021.

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## IN MEMORIAM

## Robert A. Good

### May 21, 1922–June 13, 2003

Robert Alan Good, Past President of the AAI, died on June 13, 2003, after a long struggle with esophageal cancer. One of the most influential immunologists of the 20th century, Robert Good's many contributions to understanding the cellular basis of immunity and immunodeficiency diseases made him the most cited author in science from 1965 to 1978. Good joined The American Association of Immunologists in 1962. He served the AAI in many capacities, including as a member of the AAI Council, 1970–1975, and then as President and Past President, 1975–1977.

Born in Crosby, Minnesota, Bob Good was the second son of educator parents, and the early death of his father from cancer added fuel to his quest for excellence as a student, teacher, physician, and biomedical scientist. While an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota, he developed a polio-like illness and entered medical school with his mother pushing him into classrooms in a wheelchair. Rebounding from this paralytic illness with characteristic vigor and boundless energy, he converted a pronounced limp into a trademark gait that always seemed to propel him forward. Good obtained both M.D. and Ph.D. degrees by the age of 25, when he began clinical training in pediatrics and his research on host defense mechanisms. After a fellowship year at the Rockefeller University, where he was greatly influenced by Maclyn McCarty and Henry Kunkel, Good returned to the University of Minnesota to create a school of immunology devoted to the analysis of inherited defects of the human immune system in parallel with laboratory studies of immune system development, immune system manipulation in animal models, and the phylogeny of immunity. The strength of these confluent research pursuits, Good's research prowess, and his charismatic personality soon attracted trainees and visiting investigators from around the world.

Bob Good's focus always centered on his patients, especially those with inherited defects of the immune system that rendered them more vulnerable to infections, autoimmune diseases, and cancer. A devotee to the principle of inherited diseases as "experiments of nature," Bob Good epitomized the "bedside to research laboratory and back again" approach to medicine. His intense interest in patients and their diseases inspired confidence and renewed hope, for it was immediately evident that he brought a powerful intellect and scientific enterprise to their illness. His legendary Saturday morning rounds to visit patients with his trainees invariably ended with wide-ranging blackboard discussions focused on understanding the pathogenesis of the disease in question. A seemingly chance remark of "So what?" by an owl-like-looking, hydrocephalic boy who wandered into one of these vigorous discussions, became the shorthand lexicon for focusing on what might be done next for the patient.



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Robert A. Good

A consummate speaker skilled in communicating the excitement of his field of study, Good drew overflow crowds to his plenary lectures at meetings of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology in Atlantic City. Robert Good felt that research conducted in a protected academic environment was useful only if the accrued information was passed on to the people who could put it to use, and he rarely missed an opportunity to speak to students, practicing physicians, other scientists, and community volunteers, such as the March of Dimes fundraisers. As the holder of an American Legion-sponsored professorship, he held annual meetings to inform Legion members and their wives about the research activities in his laboratory, encouraging each of his junior colleagues to give an account of their research and its goals in understandable terms. He fervently believed that society would not support research without bi-directional communication and, besides, scientists

would surely go off track if they failed to realize their research should ultimately benefit society.

Good's seminal contributions were largely made before progress in molecular biology transformed biological sciences, but his footprints are still easily recognized in many of the most topical issues in immunology. He and his coworkers established the lymphocyte as the cornerstone of cellular responses to foreign Ags in all vertebrates, including jawless vertebrates such as the sea lamprey, where we continue to search for the roots of what he termed adaptive immunity. In the field of immunodeficiency diseases Bob Good was truly a pioneer. He and his colleagues defined the cellular basis and functional consequences of many of the inherited immunodeficiency diseases, and began to sort out the linkage between different types of infectious agents and the immune system components required for protection against them. His was one of the groups that discovered the pivotal role of the thymus in immune system development. Later, this group defined the separate development of the thymus-dependent and bursa-dependent lymphoid cell lineages, and their individual responsibilities in cell-mediated and humoral immunity. These studies led to the earliest models of T and B cell development and their functional interaction, models that allowed a better definition of the different types of immunodeficiency diseases and lymphoid malignancies. Bob Good immediately turned his focus toward the use of this road map of immune system development to the treatment of patients with immunodeficiency diseases by transplantation of the healthy counterpart of the defective cell type, an endeavor he called cellular engineering. He and his students achieved the first successful bone marrow transplant, permanently curing a boy who was born with a severe combined immunodeficiency. The application of bone marrow transplantation in the treatment of immunodeficiency diseases and lympho-hematopoi-

etic malignancies continued as his central theme when Good moved to head the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research in New York (1973–1982), the Cancer Research Program at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation in Oklahoma City (1982–1985) and, lastly, Physician-in-Chief at the All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida (1985–2003).

In recognition of his many biomedical contributions Good received the Albert Lasker Clinical Medical Research Award (1970), the Gairdner Foundation Award (1970), and the American College of Physicians Award (1972). He was also a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a charter member of the Institute of Medicine.

One of Bob Good's most enduring traits was his enormous enthusiasm in the pursuit and debate of biomedical research. Habitually sitting in the front row of scientific forums taking copious notes, Bob was usually the first to the microphone to congratulate or take issue with the speaker. Irrespective of which tack he took, he invariably raised the level of excitement and attention to the scientific issue at hand. For this and many other reasons, we treasure the memory of Robert A. Good and will greatly miss this joyful giant in the field of immunology.

Good is survived by his wife and colleague of 17 years, Noorbibi K. Day-Good; a brother, Roy Good of Fairbault, Minnesota; three sons, Robert M. of Minneapolis, Mark T. of Grand Marais, Minnesota, and Alan M. of Ossining, New York; two daughters, Margaret E. Baird of Minnetonka, Minnesota, and Mary E. Good of Smithville, Maine; two step-sons, Kahlil Day of Jacksonville, Florida, and Selim Day of San Francisco, California; and 17 grandchildren.

Max D. Cooper  
The University of Alabama at Birmingham