D. Eugene Strandness, Jr, MD, died on January 7, 2002, at his home in Bellevue, Washington, at the age of 73. He was born in Bowman, North Dakota, in 1928, and his family moved to Olympia, Washington, when he was 10 years old. Dr Strandness graduated from Pacific Lutheran University in 1950 and the University of Washington School of Medicine in 1954. After an internship at Philadelphia General Hospital and a tour of duty in the United States Air Force, he completed a surgery residency at the University of Washington and a research fellowship at the National Heart Institute. He joined the University of Washington faculty in 1962, where he spent his entire career, being promoted to full professor in 1970 and serving as head of the Vascular Surgery Division until 1995. Although he retired with emeritus status at that time, he continued to conduct research and see patients until a few weeks before his death.

Dr Strandness was the 43rd President of the Society for Vascular Surgery, and in his presidential address at the annual meeting in 1989, he summarized his early career with the following words: “My professional life has been a whole series of fortunate accidents for which I can claim very little credit. I wanted to be a coach and ended up in medical school. It was my greatest desire to be a family doctor, but I ended up in surgery. I wanted to practice surgery in a fine community I had already picked out but ended up in academic medicine. I intended to pursue research in gastrointestinal disease but became involved in studies of the vascular system. Where did I go wrong?”

Dr Strandness epitomized the traditional academic ideals of research, teaching, and patient care. He had a passion for clinical investigation and presided over a National Institutes of Health–funded laboratory for virtually his entire career. His areas of interest ranged from diabetic vascular disease to deep vein thrombosis and renovascular hypertension. The breadth of this work is reflected in his bibliography, which lists 15 books, 176 book chapters, and 451 journal articles. He is best known for his many contributions to the field of noninvasive vascular testing, which established the modern vascular laboratory as an essential clinical tool. His early work focused on physiologic tests such as plethysmography and indirect pressure measurements, but he was also responsible for the development and application of direct ultrasonic methods for vascular diagnosis. In the late 1970s, Dr Strandness and a small group of engineers at the University of Washington combined a B-mode imaging system and a Doppler flow detector to create the first duplex scanner. This device is now the primary testing instrument in vascular laboratories throughout the world.

Dr Strandness could be both a strong friend and a tenacious adversary, but those who worked closely with him will remember him as a congenial, unpretentious man.
whose door was always open to anyone from medical students to visiting professors. His personal qualities were both inspiring and challenging—he had limitless enthusiasm for his work; he was full of original and interesting ideas; he was staunchly intolerant of careless or sloppy thinking; he was willing to challenge anyone; and he loved a good argument. He took particular pride in the fellows he trained and the technologists that worked in his laboratory. He supervised the training of 22 clinical vascular surgery fellows and a multitude of research fellows and vascular technologists. These individuals are his professional and personal legacy. He was also a caring and dedicated physician who set high clinical standards, and many of his patients were so loyal that they would even seek him out for care of their nonvascular problems.

Dr Strandness had few interests outside of his professional work, but he loved the game of tennis, and he played with great intensity several mornings each week before coming to the office. For those days, his mood was often set by the quality of his play, which was typically very high. He was also extremely dedicated to his family, which was the principal source of his great personal strength and faith. Dr Strandness leaves behind his wife of 45 years, Edith, son Erik Strandness, daughters Tracy Stierle, Jill Exner, and Sandra Strandness, sister Audrey Martin, and nine grandchildren. Although he was justifiably proud of his many accomplishments, the personal relationships that his work fostered clearly brought him the most satisfaction. These sentiments are reflected in the final line of his presidential address, “Our lives, careers, successes, and failures are all enmeshed in our friendships, which have stood the test of time.”

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