

In demeanor and skill, Dr. Howard Graney influenced several generations of surgeons and helped strengthen osteopathic surgery.

Gentle Man, Gentle Touch

By David Krause

Decades before answering machines and cell phones had infiltrated daily life, patients had the security of knowing that their surgeon, Dr. Howard Graney, was just a phone call away.

A 1933 graduate of the College of Osteopathic Medicine, Dr. Graney died this past October at age 94. Thirty-five years after he stopped practicing, Dr. Graney is still recognized as a pioneering osteopathic surgeon in Des Moines and as a guiding force nationally in the American College of Osteopathic Surgeons.

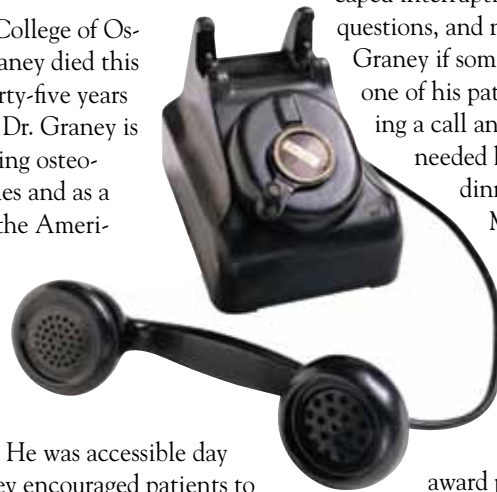
Among those who were privileged to have known Dr. Graney, he will long be remembered for his concern for patients. He was accessible day and night. In fact Dr. Graney encouraged patients to call him at home if they had questions about their surgery or follow-up care.

“Dad had a wall phone installed by the dinner table so he could take calls from patients during

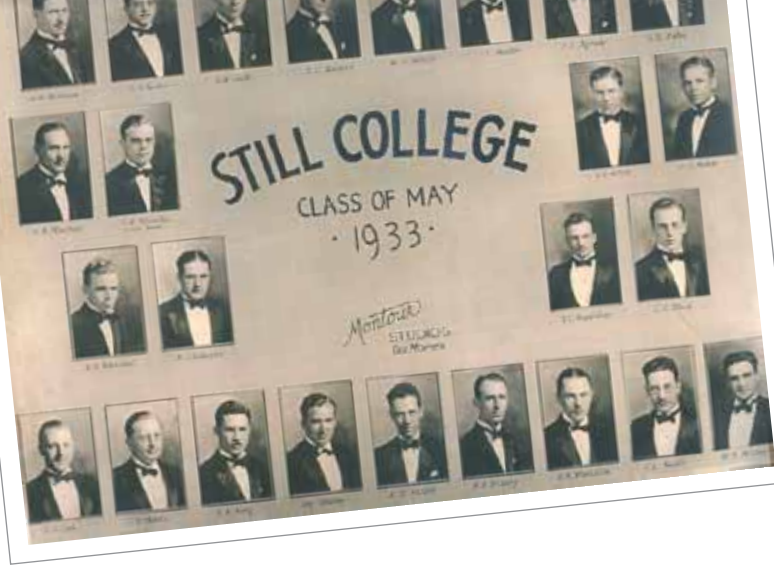
meals and at other times,” says Harriett Harrow, one of Dr. Graney’s three daughters. “He felt strongly that doctors should be available to their patients.”

Few evening meals in the Graney home escaped interruption. Patients often called with questions, and nurses knew they could call Dr. Graney if something didn’t seem right with one of his patients. Many nights, after receiving a call and sensing that a patient truly needed him, Dr. Graney would leave the dinner table and drive back to Des Moines General Hospital.

In Dr. Graney’s thinking, doctors were obligated to take calls from their patients. At the 1977 convention of the American College of Osteopathic Surgeons, where Dr. Graney received the highest award presented by the college—the Orel F. Martin Award—he gently lectured colleagues that surgeons shouldn’t have unlisted numbers or use answering services.



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A composite of Dr. Graney's graduating class. Dr. Graney is fourth from the right on the bottom row.

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Phone calls during dinner didn't always sit well with Dr. Graney's wife, Guinevere, to whom he was married 70 years and who preceded him in death. But to Dr. Graney's three daughters, interruptions were just part of home life. They had never known anything different.

That was the habit of Dr. Graney—always looking out for patients. He didn't view his concern for patients as extraordinary, but rather as normal behavior he expected of himself and other physicians. Colleagues knew him as a quiet, unassuming man who was embarrassed or bashful when anyone made a fuss over his accomplishments.

Dr. Graney is remembered as much for his gentle

manner as for his skills in the operating room and his leadership in the osteopathic profession. These characteristics defined Dr. Graney to his patients and peers. Acquaintances recall him as both doctor and friend to patients. In every situation, he was always a gentleman.

"Kindness and humility were the outstanding characteristics that set Dr. Graney apart," says Kendall Reed, D.O., dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine. "He took time with patients, and was always humble about what he was doing."

Dr. Graney trained in surgery and practiced at Des Moines General Hospital after graduating from COM in 1933. He became chief of surgery in 1940, a position he held for 31 years. He helped establish the surgery residency program at Des Moines General and directed the hospital's expansion at a time when osteopathic and allopathic surgeons maintained distinctly separate practices. During his tenure, the hospital expanded from 35 beds to 170 beds and became a leading and respected health care provider.

Fiber-optic surgical instruments were still years away when Dr. Graney retired in 1971. Even so, today's medical students could take valuable lessons from the service and timeless values that shaped Dr. Graney's professional life.

He combined surgical



Dr. Graney with his wife, Guinevere.

skill with a sensitive bedside manner, emphasizing that a physician's first responsibility is listening to the patient.

He understood that more than just a courtesy, attentive listening aided diagnosis. His personal care and interest for patients shone through. He understood that patients recover more quickly, both physically and emotionally, when they perceive their doctor truly cares for them.

"Dad was a person who touched people," says Kathleen Finkenauer, a daughter who lives in Johnston, Iowa, just north of Des Moines. "He laid hands on. He would touch people when he talked to them, assuring them they were going to be all right."

Finkenauer recalls that when she and her sisters were teenagers, they were aware their dad occasionally took calls from people whom they referred to as the "chronics"—patients who weren't really ill but kept calling anyway. Their father never turned those patients away.

"He was never one to get upset," Finkenauer says. "Dad would listen intently. He recognized that most of the time, these patients just wanted someone to listen."

Despite his caring demeanor, however, Dr. Graney's reasons for entering medical school were unapologetically pragmatic.

"One day I was pressing pants in a tailor shop," Dr.

Graney revealed during a conversation. "It was extremely hot and I thought, 'Do I want to do this for the rest of my life?' And I said, 'No, I don't think so. I'll go take osteopathy.'"

A brother-in-law who graduated from COM in 1927 played a prominent role in Dr. Graney's decision to become an osteopathic physician. But neither did the brother-in-law's influence stir the compassionate side in



In two photos taken in 1945, from left, are Dr. Graney's three daughters: Kathleen, Carol, and Harriet.



"Let your light so shine before man that the world will know you are an Osteopath pure and simple, and that no prouder title can follow a human name."

— Andrew Taylor Still

Dr. Graney. "What influenced me," he said, "was that one week he had an income of \$535. That influenced me more than anything, if you want to know the truth."

"That was behind my drive to take care of the human race, to get away from a hot press. It wasn't that I was go-

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"Here's my receipt for \$5, paid toward Still College tuition. Professors got \$150 to \$200 a month salary. Tuition was \$260 a year, or about 27¢ a lecture. I knew my lectures weren't worth too much when I taught there a few years later—one cup of coffee would get you two lectures!"
—Howard, 1998 speech to students



Des Moines General & Howard Graney: History Intertwined

Dr. Graney's professional life is inseparable from Des Moines General Hospital. After graduating from COM in 1933, he trained in surgery at Des Moines General under Dr. John P. Schwartz, dean of COM from 1926 to 1942 and president from 1942-44. Dr. Graney practiced at Des Moines General until retiring in 1972.



ABOVE: Des Moines General Hospital in the 1940s

Nurses at Des Moines General in the 1940s.



RIGHT: A surgical suite at Des Moines General in the 1920s.



The Fire of '65

A fire on January 29, 1965, destroyed most of Des Moines General Hospital. Dr. Graney and other staff helped evacuate patients safely. After the fire alarm sounded, a baby was born and staff doctors performed two surgeries.

LEFT: Firefighters survey damage from the fire.



ABOVE and LEFT: Subzero temperatures and firefighting equipment turn the remains of the burned-out hospital into an icy monolith.





LEFT: Dr. Graney addresses surgeons at the annual ACOS meeting in Los Angeles in 1958. He was ACOS president for 1958-59.

Howard Graney, D.O.
Pioneering Osteopathic Surgeon

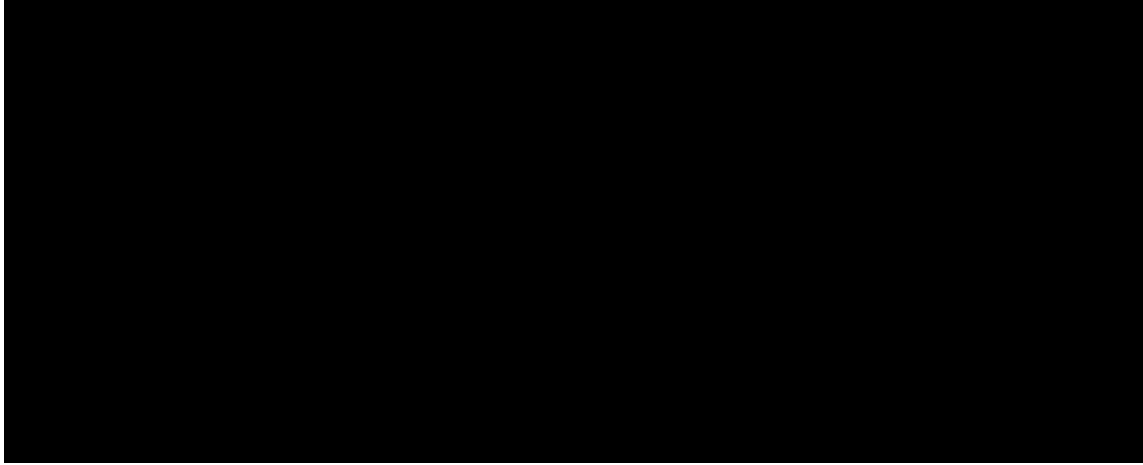
Education
D.O. Degree, 1933, College of Osteopathic Medicine
Postgraduate surgery training, Des Moines General Hospital

Academics
Professor of Surgery, COM, 1939-1946
DMU Board of Trustees, 1938-1958
Honorary Doctor of Science, DMU, 1998

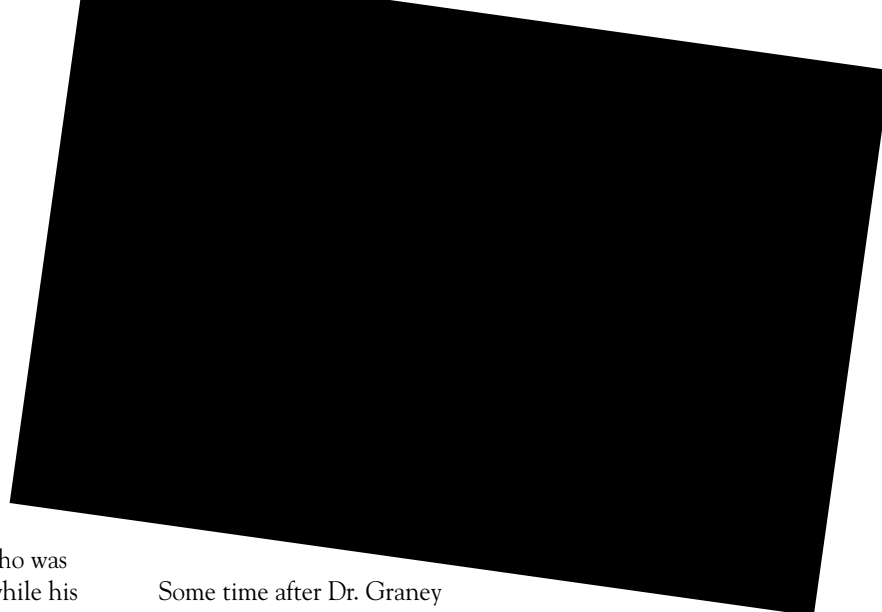
Des Moines General Hospital
Chief of Surgery, 1940-1971
Board of Trustees, 1942-1971
Directed Hospital Expansion

Professional Positions
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons, Fellow, 1948
Member & Consultant, American Osteopathic Board of Surgery, 1947-1973
ACOS Program Chair, 1950, ACOS meeting in Des Moines
ACOS President, 1958-59
ACOS Orel F. Martin Award recipient, 1977

Personal
Married 70 years to Guinevere, who preceded him in death. Three daughters, five grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren



LEFT: Members of the ACOS gather in Des Moines in 1950 for the annual meeting. Dr. Graney was program chair.



ABOVE: Dr. Graney enjoys a game of pool with friends at McCauley Terrace in Johnston, Iowa.

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ing to try to clean up the world.”
The time Dr. Graney spent pressing pants in a tailoring shop in Perry, Iowa, didn’t go to waste. “One of the jobs dad had when he attended medical school was with a dry cleaning establishment that also offered tailoring,” says daughter Harriett Harrow. “He did tailoring jobs part-time, which of course was excellent training for the suturing he learned as a surgical student. We daughters have fond memories of dad sewing on buttons and doing various other tailoring functions for us while we were growing up. He was extremely adept with a needle and thread.”

Dr. Graney’s third daughter, Carol DeChant Reinisch, saw another side of her father while working at Des Moines General Hospital. “One summer when I was working as a nurse’s aid riding to work with dad early in the morning, I noticed some newly purchased children’s activity books in the front seat—coloring books, dot-to-dot, and so forth,” she says. “I asked about the books, and dad said he bought them for a patient, a boy about age 6. I don’t recall what was wrong with the child, but it struck me that even then, it must have been unusual for a surgeon to buy materials to occupy a boy during his time in the hospital.”

“I got a new perspective on dad, that he was paternal to other children, too, and that he was a complete doctor—attending to a young boy’s fear and discomfort of being alone much of the time in a strange place while ill. Nei-

ther of these surprised me. I just recall being thankful to have had a dad like that.”
Daughter Carol also recalls the time her father refrained from sending a bill to a patient who was a Christian Scientist. Her father explained that while his patient had already suffered a crisis of conscience from submitting to surgery, he didn’t want to cause a second crisis by sending the woman a bill.

Dr. Graney’s medical practice may not have begun out of service to humanity, but compassionate care became the guiding principle of his professional life. Over the years those same principles influenced many surgeons in training under his guidance.

Dr. Norman Rose, a 1963 COM graduate and surgeon who trained under Dr. Graney, recalls him as a mentor’s mentor. “For surgeons, we say he had a beautiful pair of hands,” Dr. Rose says. “That’s a very striking thing to us. But he also had that quiet disposition. He was of the old school where you didn’t talk and didn’t have music in the operating room. You really had to observe.”

“By watching his technique, that’s how you learned in those days,” Dr. Rose says. “Plus he had just a great demeanor, one that could take individuals and mold them. That’s what he did with the people he trained.”

Some time after Dr. Graney retired in 1971, one of his daughters asked whether he missed surgery. No, Dr. Graney replied, he didn’t miss it. He had done everything he hoped to achieve. But one dimension of medicine, he said, had been hard to leave: “I do miss the teaching.”

In the spring of 2005, Dr. Graney was admitted to Mercy Capitol, the former Des Moines General Hospital where he spent his professional life. Dr. Graney had a

“We daughters have fond memories of dad sewing on buttons and doing various other tailoring functions for us while we were growing up.” – Harriet Harrow

perforated ulcer, which normally is repaired surgically. For a patient age 94, surgery of course carried heightened risks. There was a chance Dr. Graney would die if he had the operation. But then most patients with the same condition die from not having surgery.

Dr. Graney fully understood what was wrong with his

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**Des Moines General & Howard Graney:
History Intertwined**

Des Moines General as it appeared in the late 1950s.

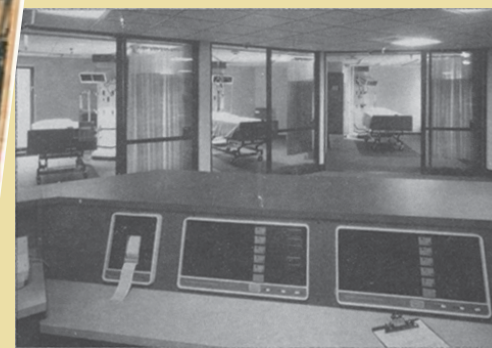


D. M. GENERAL OPENS MONDAY

Des Moines General Hospital will begin re-admitting patients next Monday afternoon, Hospital Administrator Mrs. A. E. Nuzum said Monday.
The hospital has been closed for repairs and cleaning since Jan. 29 when fire destroyed the hospital’s old wing. Mrs. Nuzum said patients will be admitted to the new wing which suffered only smoke and water damage in the fire.
Sixty seven patients can be accommodated in the new wing. She said the wing had to be repainted and X-ray and laboratory replaced because



One of the semiprivate rooms that was opened after the fire in 1965.



A view of the new ICU that opened in the 1980s.



A newspaper ad announces the opening of the Schwartz Pavilion in 1976.



Dr. Kendall Reed with Dr. Graney, summer 2005.

Renamed Surgery Fund Honors Dr. Howard Graney

A surgery fund established several years ago by Des Moines University has been renamed the Howard A. Graney Surgery Fund. The fund was established to help students and residents cover the costs of attending professional meetings and conferences. The fund also covers monetary awards to students and residents who excel in surgery.

The fund was fittingly renamed in honor of Dr. Graney, who was the first to graduate from the surgery residency program at Des Moines General Hospital. He performed surgery at Des Moines General from the time of his graduation from COM in 1933 until his retirement in 1971. During that time he trained scores of surgeons and helped strengthen osteopathic surgery at the local and national levels.

Contributions to the Howard A. Graney Surgery Fund can be sent to: Dean's Office/COM, Des Moines University, 3200 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50312.

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body. The perforated ulcer didn't hurt much, he said, so he decided to leave it alone. "I know my body, and I think the perforation will heal by itself," he told physicians and family members. So the hospital staff gave him antibiotics and watched him for a few days. And sure enough, he got better. He went back home to Johnston, Iowa, where he lived near his daughter Kathleen.

After leaving the hospital, Dr. Graney lived another seven months and enjoyed relatively good health most of that time. "It's just an indication of how in tune this man was with himself, with his body and with reality," Dr. Reed says. "He called it right again."

Dr. Graney and his family shared in "a good death" last October. His passing caught no one by surprise. At age 94 he had lived a long, full life, and death could be held at bay only so long. Dr. Graney's health had declined gradually for several months, which gave family members and friends time to visit and say their good-byes.

Four days before he died on October 22, 2005, Dr. Graney slipped into a coma and never regained consciousness. During those last few days, he would occasionally give voice to jumbled bits of memory stored from childhood.

All the while, his hands were busy, not in random movement but in deliberate, careful motions, as though he were stitching and tying off knots. Somewhere in the recesses of his mind, Dr. Howard Graney was still engrossed in the profession he loved. He was still performing surgery. ☐



Dr. Graney at work in his office at Des Moines General.

At the dedication of Des Moines General's Alixie Nuzum Board Room in 1997, from left, are: John Connors, DMG board chair; Dr. Richard Kotz, '56; Dr. Harry Barquist, '35; Dr. Howard Graney, '33; Dr. Ronnie Woods, '42; Frank Fasano; and Roy Wright, CEO of Des Moines General.



Des Moines General Hospital as it appeared in the late 1970s following the addition of two surgical suites and a cardiovascular surgery center.

A Giant Among Osteopathic Surgeons

By N. K. Pandeya, D.O., FAAOS, FAACS, FICS, FAAPRS, FAIS, '69

In the field of great surgeons, Dr. Howard Graney stood tall. This gifted teacher, innovator, and ambidextrous surgeon was one of the gentlest people I have known.

I met Dr. Graney in 1967 when I was an extern. Dr. Graney was senior surgeon at Des Moines General Hospital, where I rotated during my senior year at the College of Osteopathic Medicine. A tall, distinguished man, Dr. Graney shook hands firmly and instilled in me a trust and confidence that developed into a lifelong friendship.

I completed the first two years of surgical residency at Des Moines General Hospital. During those years I was privileged to work closely with Dr. Graney. His quiet, gentle style and warmth of character were reassuring. He taught with love, respect, and a profoundly philosophical approach. He never belittled pupils, whether a junior student or third-year resident.

Dr. Graney was well read. He brought to the hospital scientific articles he thought would help residents. Most of the time we were too tired to read all the

journals, so we appreciated Dr. Graney's kind act of bringing this valuable source of learning to us.

Another of Dr. Graney's gestures of kindness was not turning on the lights in the resident sleeping area when he arrived early in the morning. Dr. Graney would tiptoe through the dark room so he wouldn't disturb the sleeping resident who may have been up all night treating patients.

His quiet, gentle style and warmth of character were reassuring. He taught with love, respect, and a profoundly philosophical approach.

Watching Dr. Graney perform surgery was like attending a well-rehearsed symphony performance. There were no loud voices, no booming commands, no overpowering show of authority, and no unnecessary moves.

Dr. Graney had the gentlest touch when handling tissue. Even patients who had undergone major bowel resection-anastomosis were able to ambulate and start eating liquid or semisolid food within three or

four days after surgery. The patients of most surgeons took twice as long to reach post-surgical ambulation. Postoperative complications were almost nonexistent among Dr. Graney's patients.

The last surgery we did together was a gallbladder removal. We started the case, and in the middle of the procedure

Dr. Graney asked me to move to his side of the operating table. He handed me the instruments and told me to finish the case. He gently

tossed the forceps aside and walked away, tears rolling down his cheeks. That was the spring of 1972, and the last time this wonderful, talented, gracious surgeon would walk away from the operating table.

The osteopathic profession is richer through Dr. Graney's contributions to patients and students. He trained a handful of good surgeons, but influenced thousands of students who came in contact with him.



Dr. Howard Graney with Dr. Pandeya.

Des Moines General & Howard Graney:

History Intertwined

