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At the same time Dr Francis Moore was following a similar path in Boston. They both overcame very difficult technical challenges and showed that the liver could be successfully transplanted and like other organs was subjected to rejection.

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I first met Tom Starzl the 1961 and was amazed by his extraordinary work ethic. At that time he smoked 60 cigarettes a day and he seemed to be able to work 24 hours a day with a remarkable ability to focus on and overcome a specific problem. This also applied to his recreations of skiing and cycling, in both of these pursuits he was exceedingly competitive. Starzl’s memory for minute details was astounding, and he had a laser like ability to direct his attention on the cutting edge of transplantation biology. When he moved to Pittsburgh his department became the centre for training young surgeons worldwide in organ transplantation. Some visiting surgeons found him difficult to work with since he expected them to work at least half as much as he did, but most of them after leaving his hard school, forged successful new transplant centres themselves.

Thomas Starzl was showered with honors and prizes including the Lasker-DeBakey Award, but he lived quite simply showing no interest in financial gain or luxury. With the changing face of surgical training and practice it is unlikely that there will ever again be a surgeon with such influence and originality as my long-time friend Thomas Starzl, I will sorely miss our frequent encounters and discussions.

Professor Sir Roy Calne
Cambridge, 2017