



Dr. Robert Emrey Booth Jr.

March 26, 1945 - January 15, 2026

Dr. Robert Emrey Booth, Jr. of Gladwyne, PA, died Thursday, January 15, 2026, surrounded by his beloved family, in the home he and his wife, Kathy, had dedicated to the celebration of American art and antiques. Amongst his last writings, his family found a handwritten template for a business card which he had recently penned. It read simply:

Robert E. Booth, Jr. M.D.

Orthopedist

Antiquarian

Grandfather

First and foremost, Dr. Booth was a surgeon who specialized in total knee arthroplasty. His commitment to innovation in his field was matched only by equal commitments to patient care and the education of other physicians and medical professionals. Dr. Booth and his wife Katharine (Kathy) also built an internationally renowned collection of art and antiques focused on multiple facets of American history and culture. Within these two separate worlds of medicine and art, Dr. Booth expressed the gratitude he felt for his life's blessings by giving back: as a physician he led medical missions to underserved countries where his surgical talent allowed those without access to medical care walk again, while in the art and antiques communities he supported countless museums and cultural organizations by curating

exhibitions, lecturing and writing on art and antiques. Above all, he was a dedicated and beloved husband, father of three and grandfather of six, and his passion, humor and life lessons live on in his family as his greatest legacy.

Dr. Booth, Jr. was born March 26, 1945, in Philadelphia, PA, to parents Elizabeth Collinson Booth and Dr. Robert Emrey Booth, Sr. He grew up in Haddonfield, NJ, and attended Haddonfield Memorial High School, where he lettered in track and field; was Salutorian and a National Honor Society Scholarship Finalist; and received the Joseph M. T. Childrey Award—the highest honor bestowed upon a member of the graduating class in recognition of dedicated “scholarship, participation in school activities, co-operation with the faculty, and the respect of classmates.” Outside of school he was a competitive swimmer ranked at the highest levels in the state and an avid skier. It was during his childhood that Dr. Booth first began spending summers with his family on Lake Kezar in Lovell, ME, as a member of the Severance Lodge Club, an annual tradition which the family’s next generations continue to this day.

Dr. Booth matriculated with the Princeton University Class of 1967, where he, in his own words: “tried to be a ‘Renaissance Man’ as long as possible, taking all pre-med requirements in the first two years (foolish) and then English and the arts in the last two years (brilliant).” He graduated Magna Cum Laude as an English major, a member of Ivy Club, and a Rhodes Scholarship finalist. He was also a two-sport Varsity letter winner at Princeton, beginning with the swimming and diving team, then transitioning to lacrosse. It was a sport he’d never played before but learned by playing club in the summers, eventually earning a spot on the undefeated 1967 Ivy League championship team, an accomplishment which ranked high for him on a very long list of life’s successes. Again, in his words, “Swimming and lacrosse (the latter on a national championship team) taught me that there are always people smarter, faster, and frankly just better than you out there in the world. Your only hope is

hard work and the long relationships you develop, which Princeton supplied in abundance.”

Dr. Booth’s love of poetry—his senior thesis focused on the early poems of William Butler Yeats—earned him the Keasbey Scholarship and a post-graduate year at Exeter College, Oxford, England. As he loved to recount, this intellectual idyll was eventually interrupted by a telegram from his father, a prominent radiologist in New Jersey, stating: “The money’s run out. Time to learn a trade. I suggest medicine.”

Dr. Booth’s medical career began at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, from which he graduated in 1972 and where he completed his Orthopedic Research Fellowship (1974) and Orthopedic Surgery Residency (1977). He was named Chief Orthopedic Resident (1976) and received the DeForrest Willard Award for outstanding orthopedic resident. Pennsylvania Hospital, the nation’s first hospital, was the site of his internship (1972) and general surgical residency (1973), and eventually where he spent the majority of his surgical career. While his earliest years as a practicing physician focused on spine surgery, Dr. Booth eventually shifted his focus to joint replacement, and specifically total knee arthroplasty. It was within this specialty that he would go on to truly transform the field as both an innovator and educator.

In approximately five decades of surgery, Dr. Booth performed more total knee replacements than any other American surgeon, ultimately totalling over 50,000. (On his most recent 80th birthday, he performed five total knee replacements.) The volume and rate at which he operated was a feat achieved through the careful inspection and improvement of every step and aspect of a total knee operation in order to create maximum efficiency. The goal was perfection, but not for self-aggrandizement. Doing things perfectly,

but also quickly, not only cut down on infection rates, but also honed his surgical skills so that he could deliver the best results to his patients.

While his operating room procedures became so successful they were studied by visiting surgeons from around the world, as well as by Harvard Business School, at the core of this clinical approach was the most human of elements. Dr. Booth always credited his operating room success to the team of skilled, hardworking, and devoted medical professionals who he carefully recruited, supported and celebrated throughout his career and theirs. From his favorite anesthesiologists and physician assistants to nurses, scrub techs, office managers, and hospital workers and administrators, Dr. Booth understood how many people it took to care for a patient, and he valued each and every contribution made to the patient experience along the way. In fact, he rarely talked about his patients in terms of volume, but rather in terms of lives touched and trust earned. His unwavering commitment to the patient above all else has been echoed repeatedly throughout the remembrances of those who worked with him most closely.

Dr. Booth received numerous awards for his medical achievements, including the Volvo International Award for Spine Research, the Jacob Ehrenzeller Award (outstanding former Pennsylvania Hospital Resident), the prestigious Knee Society Research Award (four-time recipient), the Sir John Charnley Award, and most recently, the Knee Society Lifetime Achievement Award, to be awarded posthumously in 2026. In addition to serving as a professor at three different universities (University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, and Allegheny University of Health Sciences) and as President of the Spine Study Group and the Knee Society, Dr. Booth co-founded the eponymous 3B Orthopedic practice, most recently affiliated with the Jefferson/Aria health system, with his partners Arthur R. Bartalozzi, MD, and Richard A. Balderston, MD.

Dr. Booth entered orthopedics at the dawn of modern joint replacement and became one of the defining forces in its evolution. Among his innovations in total knee arthroplasty he pioneered numerous knee designs and instruments, the majority of which dramatically improved surgical practices for fighting infection, such as the creation of the spacer block in 1983 which persists today, along with the Patellar Nose, Computerized Pressure Balance, the use of PCR in infection and Alpha Defensin Diagnosis. He co-designed five total knee arthroplasty systems over two decades, completing work on a sixth and with a seventh in progress. (These include the AGC-PS, IB0II, Gender Knee, NexGen TKA & Revision, PCA TKA & Revision, and instrument designs such as the calibrated tensor, Bioscan, Booth Retractor and Offset Stem.)

As part of his commitment to teaching and sharing acquired knowledge with peers, Dr. Booth was a prolific lecturer, author and presenter throughout the orthopedic community. For the Current Concepts in Joint Replacement forum alone, he gave eight Keynote addresses and participated in at least 70 other talks, debates or panels. Throughout his hundreds of national and international lectures, his goal was always to be provocative, innovative and humorous, and it was the last objective that distinguished his presentations the most. As he said in his own words: “My greatest satisfaction thus far has been the grand opportunity that medicine has afforded me to use both manual and linguistic skills. I truly feel I have advanced my art, but I wish I could have done more. What probably defines me in my own world is the ability to use the verbal skills to teach and to pass on the science and, more importantly, the art of medicine to many interns, residents, fellows, and allied health workers. It is said that a teacher’s legacy never ends, and this is mine in orthopedics.”

While Dr. Booth’s myriad contributions to patient care and mobility constituted an almost daily act of “giving back,” his philanthropic legacy grew even more through his collaborations with Operation Walk Denver, a nonprofit organization committed to providing free surgical care to those with

debilitating arthritis in developing countries, led by his colleague and friend, Dr. Doug Dennis. Over his career, Dr. Booth organized and led seven distinct surgical missions to Panama, Honduras and Nicaragua where he and his carefully selected team of medical professionals performed knee replacement operations on patients, enabling many with severe and untreated deformities to walk without pain for the first time.

Dr. Booth was also an impassioned collector of art and antiques, an interest that began innocently enough with the acquisition of his first Shaker ladderback chair in 1980, and conducted very much in collaboration with his wife, Kathy. He devoted almost all of his free time (that few knew he had) to the study, appreciation, and pursuit of American art and objects from the 18th to early 20th centuries. While the collection's earliest focus was on Shaker furniture and Folk Art in the form of paintings, weathervanes, carvings, trade signs, and sculptural iron, it evolved quickly to reflect the most personal aspects of his life. The Pennsylvania-German material echoed Kathy's heritage, while objects related to America's earliest fire fighting efforts were tied to the family's Philadelphia origins (where Benjamin Franklin created the first fire company). A collection of iron mechanical banks were a concession to the couple's three children who were dragged to innumerable auctions, galleries, museums, and antique stores throughout their childhood. In his later years, Dr. Booth's collecting focus turned almost exclusively to early American ceramics and redware, eventually leading to one of the best collections of that material in the country, on par with or even superior to many museum holdings. While each of the distinct collections within the Booth collection are disparate, the common thread in each object is a celebration of the craftsmanship and artistry which perfectly—and sometimes imperfectly—balanced both form and function.

In addition to serving on a number of arts organizations, such as the

Canterbury Shaker Village Board of Trustees, the Philadelphia Museum of Art American Arts Committee, the Bryant Fellows at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the American Folk Art Society (president from 1993-1997), Dr. Booth prepared numerous articles and lectures on a variety of art and antique-related topics. In 2011, the Booths were awarded the Francis Anne Wister Award, bestowed by the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks. But the contributions of which he was most proud were the unprecedented five loan exhibits that he and Kathy curated for the Philadelphia Antiques Show from 1991 to 2000, showcasing such areas as Shaker furniture, historical children's toys, tall case clocks, historical fire material, and Philadelphia portrait miniatures. For each exhibition, they sourced the objects, wrote articles and wall text, and gave lectures and tours, but it was the opportunity to create unique and compelling ways to display the objects which Dr. Booth most enjoyed and which left the most lasting impression on exhibition visitors.

While Dr. Booth's two worlds of medicine and art seem so distinct, it is clear from his writings and lectures that he viewed them as fluidly informing each other; in the science of medicine he strove to design and create the perfect forms which would advance the surgical practice he viewed as an art. And in the art objects that captivated him, he responded to proportions and forms that often had scientific and mathematical resonance. Above all, and in all realms, he valued hard work, integrity, and the magic of language and humor to convey concepts and lessons.

More than anything, and within a life notable for its abundant achievement and volume in all things, Dr. Booth will be remembered for the way he helped, taught, and treated people as individuals. Behind the astounding surgical statistics are the personal calls he made to each and every one of his patients, the night before their surgery, to answer any last minute questions and assuage any fears. And while Dr. Booth and Kathy technically created a

collection of objects, they also assembled an even more valuable collection of people: dealers, experts, auctioneers, curators, and fellow collectors who became treasured friends, co-curators and co-conspirators. It is through these interactions that Dr. Booth leaves behind his most profound footprint, both in the steps of those who sustained or achieved mobility through his hands, and also in the steps of those who follow him as surgeons, antiquarians, and grandfathers.

Dr. Booth is predeceased by his parents and his sisters, Alison Booth Halloran, and Leslie Stafford Collinson. He is survived by his wife, Kathy, his children, Courtney (Gus Christensen) of Weston, CT, Robert (Jessica) of Brielle, NJ, and Thomas (Erin) of Portland, ME. His grandchildren, Robert, Taylor, Natalie, Eleanor, Catherine and Sam have committed themselves to carrying on their beloved "G-Dad's" penchant for pranks, the skill of telling a good joke, and his fervent belief in the importance of treating all people with kindness and respect.

A private memorial celebration is being planned for the spring. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Dr. Booth's name to Operation Walk Denver: <https://www.operationwalkdenver.org/>

Tribute Wall

CP

“ So sorry to read of the passing of Doctor Robert Emery Booth. Doctor Booth performed a simultaneous, bilateral knee replacement for me in 2010. Prior to the surgery I was unable to walk more than a city block without intense pain, often having to stop for a time before continuing. After surgery and recovery, I was able to walk two miles regularly and only stopped when I got tired and with absolutely no pain in my knees. 16 years later, the same is true. Doctor Booth, thanks for my life back. My most sincere condolences to his entire family, all of his colleagues and staff at 3B's, and his students and friends. Rest in Peace.

Carl R. Pansova

Carl P. - May 09 at 06:34 PM

LR

“ What an extraordinary legacy this man leaves behind. I had a bilateral total knee replacement in 2020 during the height of Covid, and everything was scary. His hospital and rehab facility in Langhorne was ultra efficient, the staff top notch, and their respect for Dr. Booth and what he represented was above par. He created the atmosphere of safety and care and was funny to boot! So grateful to have known him and been treated by him. May his lessons be forever shared and treasured. Deepest condolences to his beloved family and co-workers.

Linda Reider - April 29 at 12:26 PM

NV

“ During our appointment at 3B Orthopaedics these past few days, we specifically inquired about our previous surgeon, Dr. Booth. It is with utmost sadness that we learned of his passing. With heartfelt grief, we can only quote a previous tribute herein; there is nothing more we can say: "He was 1 in many million(s) and will be sorely missed by all who were lucky enough to have been in his orbit." God speed...

NV - March 24 at 10:44 PM

RD

“ I told my client I needed a knee revision, and she told me you need Dr. Booth, find him and I did and was in his office within 3 weeks and on Nov. 19, 2024, it was done. I was so grateful and I thanked him on my follow up visit. He put his hand over my knee and looked me in the eye smiled and said, "I love doing knees". I understood his passion I feel the same way about doing hair. Due to his amazing skills, I will be able to continue my passion for many more years. May his soul rest in the peace of our Lord.

Rosalia Dunbar - March 22 at 10:34 PM

TE

“ Dr. Booth replaced both of my knees in 2013 when I was at a point we're just a brief walk left me in severe pain. Immediately after the surgery, I was amazed that I had virtually no pain just some soreness. I followed his guidelines rehab at Bryn Mawr rehab and was back to work full-time cleaning carpets in six weeks. I am the same age as Dr. Booth and I am still working every day pain-free like a 40-year-old man he gave me my life back words cannot express how grateful I am to this man. God rest his soul, thank the Lord for Dr. Booth.

Tom Eno - March 22 at 03:08 PM

KC

“ I had fallen out of a tree when I was 10 years old, at that time there was nothing they could for children. By the time I was 25 I was living with excruciating pain only to find out my hip bone no longer existed. I was referred to a doctor Richard Rothman who in turn handed me over to Dr. Booth. On my way to a second surgery, Dr. Booth stopped to see me after his last surgery, which was late. I told him to get some sleep when he told me his wife was expecting any day, which happened to be the next day naming him Thomas. I remember how proud he was.

Karen Corson - March 20 at 01:23 PM

DA

“ Dr. Booth would call you the night before surgery just to make sure you were good for tomorrow. He and his staff were the best. Dr. Booth will be missed greatly.

Davidcriland - March 18 at 04:37 PM

JH

“ I was 45 when my knee completely fell apart. I was a mom, teacher and wife who could no longer live my life like I wanted. I could hardly walk and was limited in everything I did. Dr Booth gave me my life back! Now two years out I am living my second chance. His compassion and care was amazing. After 7 knee surgeries I never had a doctor call me. He called me before and a few days after my surgery. He was so kind and reassuring. I will always be grateful for what he did for me.

Jessica Hutton - March 13 at 12:29 PM

KF

“ Over 10 years ago, the amazing Dr. Booth replaced both of my knees simultaneously. He had called me the night before the operation to say I would do fine and that he would perform all of the operation himself. His work was amazing and in less than 3 months I was touring Morocco and 1 year to the day of my operation I was skiing again from the tops of Snowbird. He gave me my life back. I am forever debited to him.

What an amazing man who lived a wonderful life with always concerns for others. My condolences to his family.

Karl J Flesch - March 07 at 07:19 PM

LG

“ Dear Dr Booth, Your knowledge, interest in your patients, your passion and pride about your work replacing a knee joint stood out from the others. You changed my life for the better 5 yrs ago when you gave me new knees. I exercise, walk, play pickleball, easily get in and out of my kayak, and am generally healthier. Thank you. I ll always be grateful I found you.



lynn Guiser - February 18 at 10:54 PM

LG

Rest peacefully

lynn Guiser - February 18 at 11:17 PM

SD

“ Dr. Booth performed TKR on both my knees at different times, my last one was 9/2024. He was truly one-of-a-kind. He was professional but spoke to you with genuine care. He called the night before both of my surgeries to put my mind at ease. He was a class act with a great sense of humor. He will be greatly missed. Heaven gained a wonderful man.

Sharon DeNucci - February 17 at 03:55 PM

MS

“ Dr. Booth performed surgery on both my knees at different times. I was impressed by his professionalism, knowledge and his genuine kindness and patience. He took the time to explain the procedure in lay terms and calm my nerves. His staff is excellent. He was a true physician in every sense of the word. He genuinely cared and you knew it.. Dr. Booth will be greatly missed and I wish more physicians were like him.

marie swioes - February 17 at 11:31 AM

BD

“ Dr Booth performed a Rt total knee replacement on me in 1986 when I was 34 years old. I was suffering from Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis since my teens. After careful research, and in person visits with surgeons, I chose Dr Booth to do my surgery. That was an excellent choice on my part! Later in 1989 Dr Booth replaced my Rt hip. His surgical skills changed my life for the better! I am in my early 70's now and those replacements are still holding up! I've seen Dr Booth over the years and he was so pleased that my joint replacements are still going strong! I am saddened by his passing because he was such an amazing surgeon and human being. I was planning on a visit in the Spring, since I haven't seen him in a few years. I send my sincere condolences to his wife, children and grandchildren. This is an enormous loss to everyone. Heaven has gained a true Angel.

Barbara Damico - February 17 at 11:27 AM

CW

“ So sorry for the loss of Dr Booth, I had the honor of being a patient that had 2 total knee replacements...we commiserated on weight loss on multiple occasions, and both said we were dedicated to getting thinner...what an awesome human..thanks for all your help Dr. Booth, time to rest, bless you and your dear family

Carol Weber - February 17 at 05:55 AM

CM

“ Dr Booth did my Rt knee in 2004 at my age of 40!! And 22 years later I have never had one issue with my knee!! He will be missed but I am sure his legacy will live on in many surgeon who trained under him!! Thank you Dr. Booth

colleen moritz - February 16 at 05:49 PM

RG

“ *Dr. Booth performed a double knee replacement on my husband when he was 80 and still going strong at 93. God bless you*

Rosalyn Gambino - February 12 at 11:54 AM

CB

“ *A great intellect. A great partner. A great surgeon. He was 1 in many million and will be sorely missed by all who were lucky enough to have been in his orbit.*

Claudia balderston - February 12 at 06:34 AM

MH

“ *I was very saddened to learn about the loss of Dr. Booth tonight. Having had a terrible experience with another orthopedic doctor, I was assured I would be able to meet the challenge of a knee replacement through Dr. Booth's reassuring words of encouragement, vast unparalleled experience, and distinguished reputation. I personally never met a more genuine compassionate physician. My sincere condolences to his family, friends, and patients who were blessed to have had Dr Booth touch their lives.*

Mary Jane Heil - February 11 at 08:56 PM

AM

Dr.Booth replaced both of my knees, and I was so amazed when he called me the night before each of the surgeries to assure me that the surgery would be a success, and I was not to worry. A what a caring and compassionate Surgeon! God Rest His Soul!

Ann Monzo - February 13 at 12:36 AM

PD

I was blessed in 2014 to have both my knees replaced by Dr. Booth. He was the best, and his goodness and kindness shined through before, during and after my surgery. He gave me back my knees, and they are great 12 years later. The world lost a good man. My deepest condolences to his family. May Gods peace comfort your family, and may God welcome him home to peace and loving. He changed the lives of thousands of people, and we are forever grateful

Patrick Dougherty - May 14 at 11:38 AM

KR

“ I am very proud to say that I was one of his last surgical patients. He performed a total right knee revision on me on March 18, 2025.

Kevin Rodgers - February 11 at 01:23 PM