

The Bandera PROPHECY

April 4, 2022

Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1969, Dr. Denton Cooley implanted the first complete artificial heart in a human being. The device, developed at Cooley's Cullen Cardiovascular Laboratories in Houston, kept the patient, Haskell Karp, alive for 64 hours, until a suitable heart donor was found.

Karp died 32 hours after receiving a new human heart, from pneumonia and renal failure, but his experience proved the viability of the artificial heart as a temporary measure. That first artificial heart is now in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

Two Houston surgeons, Cooley and Michael E. DeBakey, pioneered heart transplant techniques. The development of the artificial heart dates to the early 1960s, when Domingo Liotta began research at DeBakey's Baylor laboratories in Houston.

DeBakey and his team performed the first successful coronary artery bypass graft procedure in November 1964. Cooley and his associates at St. Luke's Hospital in Houston performed the first heart transplant in the U.S. in May 1968. In August of that year DeBakey and his team performed the first simultaneous multi-organ transplant.

Despite such advances, cardiac transplantation initially had limited therapeutic success. DeBakey and Cooley reported that 60 of the first 100 heart transplant recipients died by the eighth day following surgery. Today, heart transplantation is no longer considered an experimental procedure; approximately 2,200 heart transplants were performed in 2000.