

Ralph Bingham Cloward

Ralph Bingham [Cloward](#) (born in Salt Lake City, Utah, September 24, 1908, died November 13, 2000)



American Neurosurgeon, revolutionized the field of modern [Spine Surgery](#) with his lifelong innovative and pioneering contribution. He described the [posterior lumbar interbody fusion](#) and [anterior cervical discectomy](#) and fusion. He engineered more than 100 instruments which shared his intellect and wisdom to the neurosurgery and orthopedic fraternity across the globe. He was also the first person to set up a bone bank in the United States. He rightfully deserves the title “Michelangelo of neurosurgery” for his exceptional work ¹⁾.

He attended the University of Hawaii, finished college in Utah in 1930, thereafter medical school in Utah and finished his degree as a medical doctor at Rush Medical School in Chicago in 1934.

He attended as a resident at the University of Chicago under [Percival Bailey](#). He thereafter moved to Hawaii, where he became the archipelago's first practising neurosurgeon (until 1944). In connection with the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, he performed 44 craniotomies in 4 days .

Dr. Cloward remains renowned for his contribution to spinal neurosurgery. He developed the technique called Posterior Lumbosacral Interbody Fusion (PLIF) and Anterior Cervical Interbody Fusion, the latter also known as Cloward procedure.

Ralph Bingham Cloward was a member of the Western Neurosurgical Society for 40 years and served as its President in 1975. To say he and his wife Flossie were fond of the Western would be gross understatement. After his death in 2000 (in which Flossie preceded him), a number of Society members were desirous of creating an award in his name which would include a medal akin to the Cushing medallion awarded by the AANS. It was felt that Ralph’s innovative talents and pioneering efforts to establish anterior cervical and posterior lumbar interbody fusion plus the numerous instruments he devised was just cause to honor him in perpetuity by bestowing an award upon neurosurgeons from around the world who also exemplified such capacity for epochal innovation and pioneering application. In 2002, the Society established the award with the gracious assistance of the surviving Cloward family.

Ralph Cloward Lecturing His academic accomplishments include visiting professorships at the University of Chicago, University of Oregon, University of Southern California, and Rush Medical School. He was Professor of Neurosurgery at the John A. Burns School of Medicine at the University of Hawaii. He is the author of numerous papers and book chapters and has lectured and operated all over the world.

Dr Cloward's pioneering contributions encompass many areas of neurosurgery, but his enduring interest was the spine, where he devised three major operations. He first performed the posterior lumbar interbody fusion in 1943, reporting it in the Hawaiian Territorial Medical Association in 1945 and publishing it in the Journal of Neurosurgery in 1953. His unique approach for treating hyperhydrosis was reported in 1957. Independently, he conceived an anterior approach to the cervical spine, devised instruments for its implementation, and published his classic paper in the Journal of Neurosurgery on anterior cervical discectomy and fusion in 1958. He designed over 100 surgical instruments which continue to be used today by practicing neurosurgeons.

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Throughout his career, he educated the international community of neurosurgeons in the performance of the operations he devised. He contributed his time generously to patients who have been healed by his operations in the US and throughout the world. Hundreds of thousands of patients have benefited both directly and indirectly from his technical genius, insight, and enthusiasm as a teacher.

Award recipients are provided travel, accommodation and registration expenses and present a special lecture on a topic of their choice during the meeting at which they receive the Award and medal.

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Maiti TK, Konar SK, Bir SC, Kalakoti P, Nanda A. Ralph Bingham Cloward (1908-2000): Spine Polymath. World Neurosurg. 2015 Jul 4. pii: S1878-8750(15)00809-8. doi: 10.1016/j.wneu.2015.06.061. [Epub ahead of print] Review. PubMed PMID: 26151875.

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