

William Beecher Scoville

William Beecher Scoville (January 13, 1906 – February 25, 1984) was a [neurosurgeon](#) at [Hartford Hospital](#). Scoville established the Department of Neurosurgery at Connecticut's Hartford Hospital in 1939.

He performed surgery on Henry Gustav Molaison in 1953 to relieve epilepsy that led to damage to Molaison's hippocampus and left him with a memory disorder.

He was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on January 13, 1906. Although he had a strong interest in automobiles throughout his life, his father pushed William toward a career in medicine. After completing his undergraduate degree at Yale (B.A., 1928), he attended and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in 1932. In 1941, he became board certified in neurosurgery. Also, in 1941 he started the first neurosurgical residency training program in Connecticut. He trained a total of 63 neurosurgeons, 46 from the U.S. and 17 foreign. In 1953 he performed surgery on Henry Gustav Molaison. The surgery was supposed to treat Molaison's epilepsy - Scoville had a "hunch" that the hippocampus was responsible, and based on this erroneous guess, removed Molaison's hippocampus - sucking it out using a medical tool which comprises a cauterizing blade and suction vacuum. All the while, his anesthetized but conscious patient sat in the operating chair. Of course, the hippocampus is now known to be crucial in the formation of memories - and so Henry Molaison was rendered unable to form new memories for the rest of his life. William Scoville was Luke Dittrich's grandfather. Dittrich has now written a book about Patient HM and his grandfather

Scoville died as the result of a car crash on February 25, 1984.

Scoville also contributed to the development of the aneurysm clip. Scoville's modification was to place a coiled spring with an axis parallel to the plane of clip closure as described in the article Scoville WB: Miniature torsion bar spring aneurysm clip. J Neurosurg 25:97, 1966.

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