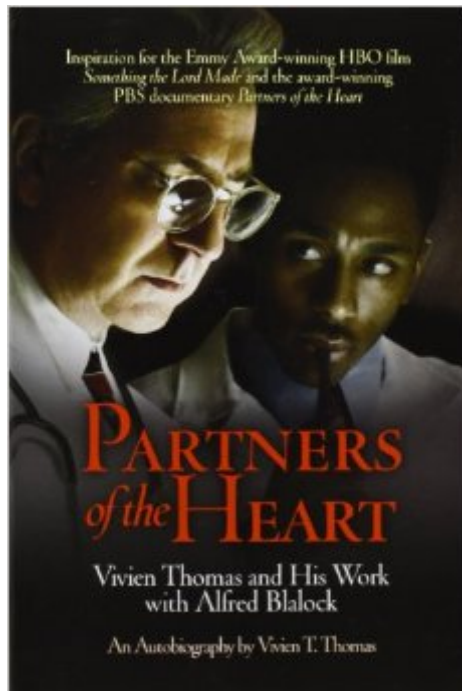


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# Partners Of The Heart: Vivien Thomas And His Work With Alfred Blalock: An Autobiography



## Synopsis

Visitors to the Blalock Building at the Johns Hopkins University Medical Center are greeted by portraits of two great men. One, of renowned heart surgeon Alfred Blalock, speaks for itself. The other, of highschool graduate Vivien Thomas, is testimony to the incredible genius and determination of the first black man to hold a professional position at one of America's premier medical institutions. Thomas's dreams of attending medical school were dashed when the Depression hit. After spending some time as a carpenter's apprentice, Thomas took what he expected to be a temporary job as a technician in Blalock's lab. The two men soon became partners and together invented the field of cardiac surgery. *Partners of the Heart* is Thomas's extraordinary autobiography. Trained in laboratory techniques by Alfred Blalock and Joseph W. Beard, Thomas remained Blalock's principal technician and laboratory chief for the rest of Blalock's distinguished career. Thomas very rapidly learned to perform surgery, to do chemical determinations, and to carry out physiologic studies. He became a phenomenal technician and was able to carry out complicated experimental cardiac operations totally unassisted and to devise new ones. In addition to telling Thomas's life story, *Partners of the Heart* traces the beginnings of modern cardiac surgery, crucial investigations into the nature of shock, and Blalock's methods of training surgeons.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this book you will hear from Vivien Thomas himself. As wonderful as the movie was, it did take some dramatic license here and there. Vivien tells the story of the first "blue baby" operation very

matter of factly. As you read the book you will discover that he played things pretty close to the vest. He was not one for dramatic outbursts or fits of temper. Thomas is a dignified quite man and his relation with Dr. Blalock was not all sweetness and light but they worked well together and became very close. There is a lot of medical talk in the book. The squeemish may have trouble getting through the accounts of the experiments that were performed on the dogs. Don't let that stop you from reading this book. It gives you a wonderful insight into this modest, unassuming but brilliant doctor. He never went to medical school but taught some of the finest surgeons in the world how to operate. Happily, Thomas was finally given an honorary doctorate by Johns Hopkins. If you have seen the movie, don't expect this book to play out the same way. This is real life. Enjoy!

As a medical student at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, I found it absolutely fascinating to peer into the life of a man who worked side by side with Dr. Blalock to help develop some of the most important advances in surgery of the 20th century. I have seen the portrait that Mr. Thomas describes in the book still hanging in the atrium of the Blalock elevators. I recommend this book to anyone interested in medical or surgical history.

The story of Vivian Thomas is one that every student in the health professional field should study. The simple elegance of his surgical ability combined with his ability to critically think transcend the commonplace notion of traditional medical school training.

Excellent autobiography of a relatively unknown giant of medicine who helped pioneer heart surgery. I bought this for my 12 year old child for a history project, and the text was way over her head, but it would be a good story for any high schooler who was interested in going into medicine.

Vivien Thomas tells the story of his life with groundbreaking medical researcher Dr. Alfred Blalock in an interesting, easy-to-read style. In places, he gets a little technical for the average reader, but that doesn't detract from the story. Thomas was an amazing man. In an age when racial discrimination was the norm, Thomas set boundaries and refused to be intimidated by personalities or institutions. He maintained his dignity and professionalism without exhibiting the kind of flaming rhetoric we see from some Black advocates today. Even though he finally received recognition toward the end of his career for his pioneering research, he never received the credit he was due in medical journals and published papers. It's also sad that he was never paid what he was worth throughout his career. Thomas is the kind of man Black youths should be looking up to rather than the vapid heroes

they tend to choose from sports, music and movies.

This is such an amazing story about a brilliant man, Dr. Vivien Thomas. It is amazing what Dr. Thomas accomplished without any formal training beyond high school. The field of cardiac research/surgery would not have been the same without him. When I found out my county library did not have this book I purchased it from so I could donate it to the library. This book should be available to anyone who wants to read about Dr. Vivien Thomas and his enormous contribution to the field of medicine!

Very interesting to follow the challenges and choices that Mr. Thomas makes throughout his remarkable career. A bit of a distracted read if you do not have the technical background to understand many of the technical procedures that he used and helped to develop, but still a fascinating story.

I had watched the HBO movie "Something the Lord Made" with Alan Rickman and Mos Def, both of whom were outstanding in their parts. The movie was based on the book "Partners of the Heart". I watched the movie without knowing what book it was based on and it was outstanding so I wanted to read the book. I wasn't disappointed. There were some lengthy parts in the book with details of surgical descriptions, etc., but after all, that's what it's about and the sections were generally written so most could follow the descriptions with little difficulty, I thought. Overall, very interesting, touching at times and definitely worth the time to read it.

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