

In Memoriam: Remember Dean James Banta

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Dean Thomas LaVeist and Ms. Gladys Banta pose alongside Dr. James Banta's dean portrait.

Renowned expert in tropical medicine and eighth dean of the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Dr. James E. Banta, passed away one year ago on April 10, 2023, at the age of 95.

Banta succeeded Dr. Frank Moore as dean in 1975 and held the position until 1987. His tenure marked a period of significant growth in international health at Tulane, further enhancing the institution's reputation in the field. Under his leadership,

Tulane developed robust research and practice programs in Latin America and Africa.

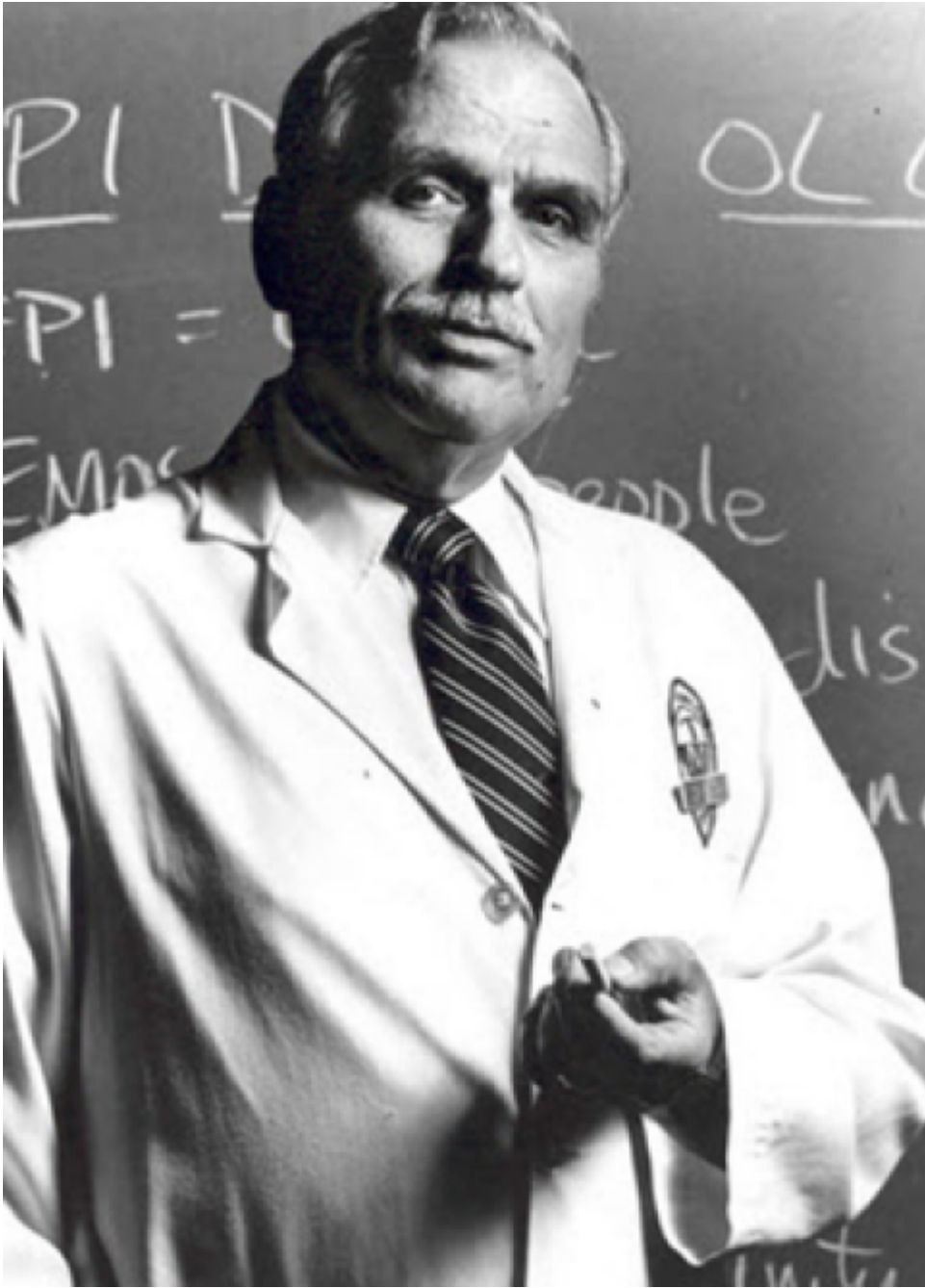


Dean Banta's daughter, Wendy Banta Parham, studies the collection of dean portrait photos.

Among his notable contributions, Banta was the first to cultivate the dengue virus in tissue culture, shedding light on its destructive impact. In a 2001 article in the *Journal of Community Health*, he reflected on the historic bubonic plague of the 14th century, emphasizing the role of isolation and quarantine in controlling contagious diseases.

During his tenure as dean, Banta also led the Department of Health Measurement Sciences from 1977 to 1981. Later in his career, he served as a professor at the George Washington University Medical Center.

Born on July 1, 1927, in Tucumcari, New Mexico, Banta earned his medical degree from Marquette University in 1950 and an MPH from Johns Hopkins University in 1954. He served in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Public Health Service, as well as serving as the medical director for the U.S. Peace Corps for two years.



Dean James Banta, photo circa 1982.

Beyond his professional achievements, Banta was known for his humor, humility, and diverse interests, including classical music, gourmet cooking, and avid reading of medical and historical literature.

He is survived by his wife, Gladys Alva Banta, daughters Wendy Banta Parnham and Susan Jennifer Campbell, and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Recently, Gladys and Wendy visited the Tidewater Building to reflect on Banta's legacy as dean, reminiscing over photos of the esteemed leader.

In the *New Orleans Clarion Herald* in an article from 1982, Banta said, "Good health for all people, that's what public health is all about."