



### JOHN BEAUREGARD JOHNSON, M.D., D.Sc., F.A.C.P., 1908-1972

Dr. John B. Johnson, professor of medicine and chief of the Division of Cardiology in the Howard University College of Medicine and director of the Cardiovascular Laboratory of Freedmen's Hospital, died on December 16, 1972, at the age of 64, after a cerebral hemorrhage. He had served on the Howard medical faculty for 37 years and had been head of the Department of Medicine for 14 years, 1949-62. Tuskegee Institute awarded him the honorary D. Sc. in 1956. He was 15th Distinguished Service Medalist of the National Medical Association in 1960.

Dr. Johnson was born in Bessemer, Alabama, April 29, 1908, the eldest of three sons of John B. and Leona Duff Johnson. His father was a postman in Bessemer. Dr. Johnson was one of the "big three" which iron and steel center gave to the Howard University College of Medicine. The other two are Dr. John W. Lawlah, professor of radiology and dean (1941-46) and Dr. K. Albert Harden, professor of medicine and dean (1965-70).

After elementary education in Bessemer, Dr. Johnson finished high school at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. In 1931 he received the A.B. from Oberlin College where he earned his letter in track. He then entered the Western Reserve University School of Medicine, which awarded him the M.D. in 1935. The writer, while a graduate student, was one of his instructors in gross anatomy at WRU in 1931. He worked at a table with three white girls. As all four were bright and industrious, their's was one of the best tables in the class.

Dr. Johnson served his internship in Cleveland City Hospital and the following year, 1936, came to Howard as a laboratory assistant in physiology, spending his entire career in this institution. In 1937 he joined the Department of Medicine with the rank of assistant, becoming instructor in 1938, director of clinical laboratories in 1941, acting head of the Department in 1944, and professor and head of the Department in 1949. He served as director of the Division of Cardiology from 1969 until his untimely passing.

Dr. Johnson was very active in the National Medical Association giving dynamic leadership to its Council on Scientific Assembly as chairman over two different periods, 1954-63, and 1966-72. Prior to this he had been

chairman of the Section on Internal Medicine from 1946 to 1954.

Over the past several years Dr. Johnson had played an important role in arranging the scientific programs of the Post-Convention Tours of the National Medical Association, a function which took him to many foreign countries.

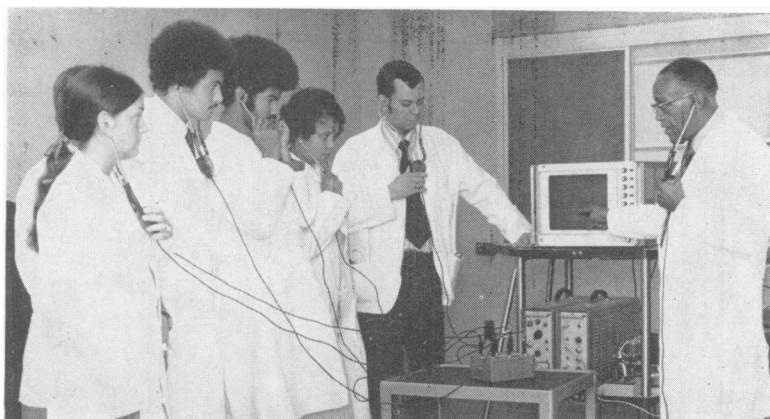
Dr. Johnson became a diplomate of the American Board of Internal Medicine in 1942, a fellow of the American College of Physicians in 1950, and a fellow of the American College of Cardiology in 1951. His interests as an internist gradually centered on cardiovascular conditions and his work in this area brought him many recognitions.

It was the present writer's privilege in 1958 to propose him for membership on the Board of Directors of the American Heart Association on which he served until 1968. He was a vice president of this organization at the time of his death. He was president of the Washington Heart Association in 1972, having been a director since 1962 and secretary, 1966-68.

In 1964 he was a member of the faculty of the 10th International Circuit Course of the American College of Cardiology which visited Indonesia, Ceylon and Viet Nam, and in 1965 was a faculty member of the 13th International Circuit Course given in Brazil, Argentina and Chile. In 1967 he was treasurer of the American College of Cardiology and in 1972 became a governor of the District of Columbia chapter of that body.

Dr. Johnson was a charter member of the American Federation for Clinical Research and of Gamma of the District of Columbia Chapter of Alpha Omega Alpha (Howard, 1955). He was president of the John A. Andrew Clinical Society in 1963 and of the Association of Former Internes and Residents of Freedmen's Hospital in 1956. At Freedmen's Hospital he was program director under an NIH Cardiovascular Undergraduate Training Grant, 1950-72, and for a Graduate Training Grant in 1960. He was chairman in 1963 of the American Committee on Africa of the International Society for Rehabilitation. He was also a member of the Steering Committee of the Metropolitan Washington Health and Welfare Council.

Dr. Johnson was elected to Sigma Xi while at the



Dr. John B. Johnson instructing medical students.

University of Rochester in 1941. He twice received the Susan B. and Theodore Cummings Humanitarian Award of the American College of Cardiology in 1964 and 1965 and a citation from the journal, *Angiology Research*, for the Outstanding Publication of 1966.\*

Dr. Johnson was an excellent, exciting and dramatic teacher. He drove himself hard in all his multilateral activities and his energy and enthusiasm were infectious.

Dr. Johnson's research activities are reflected in the appended list of his 64 publications, authored singly or with associates. They represent a consistent appreciation of quality. His first papers appeared in 1941, when three were published. Another followed in 1942. From 1944 through 1949 there were about one a year. Beginning in 1950 about three appeared annually until 1957, when his career high of eight were printed. Thereafter the number of titles averaged about three a year and in his last four years three papers came from his hand.

His early researches covered a variety of subjects, many dealing with materials at hand which could be explored clinically on his own wards and in cooperation with other divisions. In the tradition of Booker T. Washington, who founded Tuskegee Institute where Dr. Johnson received his secondary education, "JB" was a man who could set down his buckets where he was. Research grants were rare in Dr. Johnson's early days and he learned to build bricks without straw.

By 1954 his interests were definitely becoming concentrated in angiocardiology and he progressively made himself more and more expert in catheterization techniques, and, through both his teaching and research, did much to promote recognition of the value of this modality in his own institution and elsewhere.

As his experience and perspectives broadened and his reputation increased, more and more demands were made upon his time in the area of public service. In 1972 he was appointed to the National Advisory Council on Hypertension to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

\* Paper No. 53 on appended list.

When Dr. Johnson appeared on the Howard scene in 1936, Dean Numa P. G. Adams was just entering upon the arduous task of securing well trained young men for the full-time clinical faculty. Some of the difficulties he encountered in this task have been described elsewhere.<sup>1-3</sup> At first he could secure no opening anywhere for the training of a Negro in a clinical field. By 1938 a few cracks in the wall had appeared and in that year Dr. Charles R. Drew had gone from Howard to Columbia University for two years study in surgery. In the following year, 1939, Dr. John B. Johnson was sent to the University of Rochester for two years study in internal medicine. Both were on General Education Board fellowships.

These men had been selected for their promise as potential heads of the Departments of Surgery and of Medicine, respectively. Each man did his part, but two white physicians who had been brought to Howard for five years to train surgeons and internists, did not want to relinquish the chairs.<sup>1-3</sup> Before he died in 1940, Dean Adams had insisted on adherence to the agreement, but it had remained for Dr. Joseph L. Johnson, as acting dean in 1941, to clear the way for Dr. Drew and Dr. J. B. Johnson later to be appointed, as they became eligible, as heads of their respective departments.<sup>1-8</sup>

Under another General Education Board fellowship Dr. Johnson spent the year 1948-49 as a fellow in cardiology in the Columbia University Division of Bellevue Hospital, New York.

In 1954 Dr. Johnson and Dr. R. Frank Jones were appointed to the staff of Georgetown University Hospital,<sup>7, 8</sup> representing the final break-through in the campaign to secure parity in recognition and opportunity for Afro-American physicians in the District of Columbia. The first phase of this campaign took three years, 1945-47, and resulted in the admission of Howard University physicians on an equal basis with those from Georgetown and George Washington University to the staff of Gallinger Municipal (now District of Columbia General) Hospital. The second phase took as long, 1948-52, to secure the admission of Negro physicians to the Medical Society of the District of Columbia. The

third phase was the break-through just cited in the staff appointments of Drs. Jones and Johnson.<sup>8</sup> It is now up to the young backs who run without getting their shirts dirty, through the holes made by the previous generation of much battered linemen, to show that they can gain some real yardage.

Following his resignation as head of the Department of Medicine, Dr. Johnson was given a testimonial dinner by the Department at the Presidential Arms on June 22, 1962, at which his friend from boyhood Dr. John W. Lawlah, presided. A testimonial script was presented to him by Dr. W. Lester Henry, and a gift by Dr. Margaret E. Grigsby. There were remarks by the Vice Dean, Dr. K. Albert Harden.

Howard University has not tended to do too well by its veteran and outstanding servants. Dr. Ernest Just,<sup>4</sup> the biologist, and Dr. Percy Lavon Julian,<sup>5</sup> the chemist, are the two most distinguished scientists the American Negro has yet produced. Just spent his entire career at Howard but in the end felt so crushed by it that in his major work, "The Biology of the Cell Surface," published in 1939, the name of Howard does not appear.<sup>4</sup> After Julian had made a brilliant start at Howard and designed its present Chemistry Building, he resigned in 1932, but the University really thrust him out and forced him to become a millionaire. The Chemistry Building, still unnamed, was dedicated in 1934 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, who had founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915 was called to Howard in 1919 as dean of the College of Liberal Arts and head of the Graduate Faculty. He had come with great zeal as a professional historian, because of the apparent opportunity to advance high academic standards among Afro-Americans and for an ardent pursuit of studies of their historical background. He was dismissed in 1920 after a clash with President J. Stanley Durkee, over a matter of what students should be permitted to read of basic documents. Dr. Durkee was known to be abusive and it is sure that Dr. Woodson, a tough former miner, gave as good as he got. The Trustees had demanded that he apologize to the president and Dr. Woodson refused,<sup>9</sup> God bless him, and he went forth alone to build the secure foundation on which all "Black Studies" today securely rest. The writer has found throughout the country that many students and faculty who major in "Black Studies" are unfamiliar with the name of Carter G. Woodson.

Dr. Alain LeRoy Locke, the first Negro Rhodes scholar, professor and head of Howard's Department of Philosophy, for whom Howard's Locke Hall is named, was dismissed by President Durkee and later reappointed by the then new President, Mordecai W. Johnson. Dr. Locke was a philosopher of impeccable scholarship and standards, always modest and conservative in his own life style. Perceiving the need of the hour he had been one of the most active figures in the Negro Renaissance of the 20's, exemplified in his book, "The New Negro" (1925). Dr. Locke had proposed for Howard a course in "interracial relations" which the Trustees, after

changing the name to "interracial history," rejected in 1915 without explanation, on the grounds that "it is inexpedient to establish a course in Negro problems at this time."<sup>9</sup>

Although there are now new kings over Egypt which knew not Joseph, and Dr. John B. Johnson knew the feel of the scimitar, the perception may be gaining that, as Dicken's wrote of La Guillotine, the national razor grows dull from over-use.

Fate has been a little kinder to the memory of Dr. John B. Johnson. The College of Medicine has one endowed clinical chair which has been allotted to the Department of Medicine. On January 25, 1973, the faculty of the College of Medicine, on recommendation of the Department of Medicine, voted unanimously to name this chair after Dr. Johnson. Henceforth and hereafter, therefore, the incumbent will have the honor of being the John Beauregard Johnson Professor of Medicine.

Dr. Johnson was thrice married. He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Audrey Ingram Johnson; a daughter by his second wife, Linda Elaine; and a stepdaughter, Adrienne Fairley. Also surviving are four sisters and two brothers, one of whom, Walton, is a practicing physician in Philadelphia.

W. MONTAGUE COBB, M.D.

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