

In Memoriam

ALBERT O. SINGLETON

1882-1947

ALBERT O. SINGLETON, professor of surgery at the University of Texas School of Medicine, died at his home in Galveston on June 12, 1947, of coronary artery disease. He was widely known as an outstanding surgeon and medical educator and was, in addition, greatly beloved by many friends both within and outside the profession.

He belonged to a small group of surgeons, now rapidly disappearing in an age of increasing specialization, who could perform almost any type of operation well. He was also recognized as a leader in the adoption of new surgical techniques and procedures. He was an early advocate of upper intestinal decompression as a routine postoperative measure, and he realized the importance of maintaining proper fluid and electrolytic balance in his patients at a time when administration of parenteral fluids was considered a radical procedure. He was the first man in the state of Texas to perform a total gastrectomy, a pneumonectomy, and closure of a tracheo-esophageal fistula. Because of his vast amount of experience in many fields of surgery, he could write and talk authoritatively on a wide variety of subjects. His best known papers dealt with the problem of wound disruption, the use of anatomic incisions, cancer surgery of the large bowel, diseases of the lymphatics, splenectomy, and the newer aspects of thoracic surgery. He continually stressed the importance of fundamental anatomy, physiology, and pathology in the treatment of the patient, and felt that all progress in surgery must rest upon advances in these basic sciences. In addition to his medical writing, he was particularly interested in the history of medicine in Texas, and chose as his presidential address for the Southern Surgical Association in 1939, an account of "The Surgeon in the Romantic Story of Texas.

As a clinical teacher of surgery in the wards and as an operating room demonstrator, Dr. Singleton was at his best. He was a master technician, bold and decisive as an operator, but ever cautious in his handling of the tissues. His remarks were punctuated by wit and emphasized by brevity.

Dr. Singleton received his surgical training under Dr. James E. Thompson, having been granted his medical degree from the Medical Branch of The University of Texas in 1910. He was associated with the institution for thirty years, and was appointed professor of surgery and chief surgeon of the John Seally Hospital upon Dr. Thompson's death in 1927. He worked constantly for the betterment of the hospital and medical school and was instrumental in bringing to fulfillment a program of expansion of the physical plant as well as setting up the first postgraduate program in Texas for specialty training. Under his leadership, the departments of Orthopedics, Genitourinary Surgery, Thoracic Surgery, and Plastic and Maxillo-facial Surgery were set up and provisions were made for animal research. Because of his untiring efforts, the Medical School was able also to establish, a number of years ago, an Anesthesia Department of the first class.

A member of the Founder's Group of the American Board of Surgery, Dr. Singleton served on the Board of Governors of the American College of Surgeons from 1937 to 1940. He was also vice-president of the latter organization in 1939-1940, and had been president of the Southern Surgical Association, president of the Texas Surgical Society, and vice-president of the American Surgical Association. He was also a member of the editorial staff of SURGERY. He belonged, in addition, to the American Association of Thoracic Surgery, the International Surgical Association, the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma, the American Cancer Society, Kappa Sigma, Phi Alpha Sigma, and Alpha Omega Alpha. He was an active participant in organizational meetings, enjoying keenly the stimulation of association with surgical colleagues and contributing greatly himself to scientific discussion of surgical problems.



Albert O. Singleton

Dr. Singleton was genuinely devoted to his family and home. He is survived by his wife, the former Miss Will Dean Bivens, and by two sons, Dr. Albert O. Singleton, Jr., and Dr. Edward B. Singleton.

Dr. Singleton stood always for the highest personal and professional ideals. His name must be added to the list of illustrious surgeons in the Romantic Story of Texas.

—*T. G. Blocker, Jr.*