

DR. ROBERT S. SPARKMAN
LECTURE SERIES IN SURGERY



DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER
AT DALLAS



ROBERT S. SPARKMAN, M.D.

Dr. Robert S. Sparkman, a long time supporter of the UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, was born on February 18, 1912 at Brownwood, Texas, the son of Ellis H. and Viola Stanley Sparkman. He received his undergraduate degree from Baylor University in Waco prior to receiving his Medical Degree in 1935 from the Baylor Medical School, after which he moved to Dallas. Dr. Sparkman continued his postgraduate education with internships and residencies in pathology and surgery. During the third year of his residency in surgery at the University of Cincinnati, he was ordered to serve an obligatory year of active duty in the U.S. Army Medical Corps Reserve at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. During that year, he met and courted Miss Willie Ford Bassett of Dallas, who became his wife on February 21, 1942. After a two-day honeymoon, his hospital was shipped out and it was three years and two months before he and his bride saw or spoke to one another. Over the next 55 years their relationship grew based on their love and respect for each other and their mutual accomplishments.

Following his distinguished military career, during which he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the Distinguished Unit Citation with Oak Leaf Cluster, three Battle Stars, and an Invasion Arrowhead, he entered the private practice of surgery in Dallas on February 1, 1946. In addition to providing thorough and meticulous care to his patients, he found time to volunteer his time and expertise to the clinical services at Parkland and Children's Hospitals. He also served as a civilian surgical consultant to the Army Surgeon General, which required extensive travel around Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

He was a brilliant diagnostician, masterful technician, and an astute scholar of surgical history. In July 1969, he became a "full-time" salaried chief of the department of surgery at the Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas. He continued in that capacity for more than twelve years, during which time he initiated several department endowment funds and visiting professorships. On January 1, 1982, he was awarded emeritus status in the department of surgery. The

one million-dollar Robert S. Sparkman Chair in Surgery was funded in 1986 by the generous contributions of friends, colleagues, and patients.

He had a tenacious love for the American College of Surgeons and many other surgical organizations, twenty of which he was a member and another seven of which he was an honorary fellow. He held the position of Governor of the American College of Surgeons from 1962-1969 and served as president of the Dallas Society of General Surgeons, The Texas Surgical Society, and the Southern Surgical Association. He served as vice president of the prestigious American Surgical Association and was designated as distinguished alumnus of both Baylor University and Baylor College of Medicine in addition to numerous other honors. In 1995, the North Texas Chapter of the American College of Surgeons honored Dr. Sparkman by establishing the Robert S. Sparkman Endowed Lectureship.

His research interests encompassed a wide variety of subjects with emphasis on surgery of the biliary tract, as well as the history of gallbladder and abdominal surgery. He was the author or principal editor of 80 publications. He was in frequent demand as a guest speaker and visiting professor, having delivered seven named lectureships. He served on the editorial board of the American Journal of Surgery, was a Diplomate of the American Board of Surgery and a member of the Alpha Omega Alpha medical scholarship society. He was active in community affairs and a loyal supporter of the Dallas Public Library.

An avid supporter of the medical school, he and his wife gave UT Southwestern 73 works by the late Arizona artist Thaddeus S. Marczak and six hand-colored engravings by Thomas Rowlandson, illustrator of the famous "Dr. Syntax" stories printed in the early 1800's. A bookcase containing 30 donated literary treasures dealing with all aspects of medicine now resides in the department of surgery conference room.

Prior to his death, in March 1997, he made a \$75,000 challenge grant which serves as the core of the now established Robert S. Sparkman, M.D. Visiting Lecture. The Department of Surgery is most grateful and appreciative of the generosity in terms of time, money, talent, and friendship provided by both Dr. and Mrs. Robert Sparkman