

AMOS N. JOHNSON, MD 1908-1975

Dr. Amos N. Johnson was born in Garland, North Carolina, on June 5, 1908, to Mary Lily Wright and Jefferson Deems Johnson. He was destined to become one of the great leaders of medicine.

Following his graduation from the Blue Ridge Preparatory School, Amos went to Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, where he achieved the presidency of the student body. In 1929 he received his AB degree from Duke and proceeded to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to study medicine. After two years there, he transferred to the University of Pennsylvania, where in 1933 he received his MD degree.

A year's internship at Jackson Memorial Hospital, Miami, Florida, preceded the opening of a general practice in Garland, North Carolina, in 1934, where he was actively practicing family medicine until his death on April 23, 1975.

"Monk," his devoted wife, the former Miss Mary Porter Allan, was his companion in his professional work and accompanied him on as many of his travels as she possibly could. She and Amos have two children, Mrs. William R. (Mary Allan) Watts, Jr, now living in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and a son, Amos Neill Johnson, Jr, who is famous as a "road car" racing driver and is a member of the IMSA. There are three grandchildren.

Amos, whose name is related to a verb meaning "to bear a load," was burdened with many trials and tribulations of health affairs. He began early in his career to serve his fellow physicians when he was elected to the presidency of the Sampson County Medical Society and later to the presidency of the Medical Society of the State of North Carolina, the "Tar-Heel" state which he dearly loved.

Who among us who served in the

Congress of Delegates of the American Academy of Family Physicians will ever forget the "team" of Drs. Sam and Amos Johnson forcefully and eloquently defending against anything that would cast aspersions on their beloved state or even on any of its produce, including tobacco.

Before Amos became a delegate to the Congress, he served in the North Carolina chapter as a member of its Commission on Education, a position he held for ten years. After serving as Chairman of the commission, he became President of the chapter and served on the Board of Directors for many years. After eight years as a delegate from his state to the Congress of the then American Academy of General Practitioners, he was elected to the Board of Directors and was chosen as Chairman of that body during his term. In 1964-65 he became President-elect of the Academy and he then served as President for a term of

18 months — longer than any other president of the Academy.

In 1965 he was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina and he served in that capacity until 1972.

While Dr. Johnson was serving in the Congress of Delegates he was a member of the Committee on Insurance, the Commission on Hospitals, and the Committee on the Scientific Assembly, for whom he chaired the annual meeting in 1961 in Miami, Florida.

By this time, Dr. Amos Johnson was already becoming a legend and, in my opinion, could well wear the title of a "Paul Revere" of medicine, for he would often greet his colleagues with "I've got news for you! — The Feds are coming" or some other information pertinent to the day. He was in high positions and would take time to share his information with those who were too busy with their professional duties to pay much attention to what was going on outside their daily lives. His duties as a member of the JCAH Commission gave him a broader overview of health care, and he served faithfully for ten years in this assignment.

He was honored by six appointments by governors of North Carolina. He served on the State Hospital Board of Controls, the Governor's Committee for Court Reform, the White House Conference on the Aged, the Mental Health Advisory Board, the Economic Development Committee (1967), and the Health Planning Committee (1969).

Amos Johnson exerted a tremen-

dous influence on the groups who studied the decline of the numbers of physicians going into general practice. Amos represented the AAGP along with Dr. Julius Michaelson of Foley, Alabama, while I represented the AMA Section on General Practice, and Dr. Francis L. Land, the only other GP, was one of the representatives of the Council on Medical Education. This committee was later to be known as "The Willard Commission," named in honor of its Chairman, Dr. William R. Willard. This was one of three groups charged with studying the same problem, but Amos' influence was also exerted on the other two as he was close friends with the Chairmen and many members of the other two groups, the Millis and Folsom Commissions. Amos' wit and humor, which was somewhat similar to that of Senator Sam Ervin, very often evened the tempers and reduced the temperature of the debates so that progress toward a common solution for a joint statement could be achieved. He is due much credit as a "Champion of the Cause" of the acceptance of the final report of the Willard Commission, which served as the basis of the application of the Twentieth Medical Specialty "Family Practice" by the AAGP and the Section on General Practice of the AMA.

Dr. Amos Johnson was a charter member of the American Board of Family Practice and served as president in 1972. He was treasurer of the Board at the time of his death.

In legislative affairs, he had no equal, for he was on a friendly basis with almost every influential leader in

the United States and governmental figures in Washington, DC, where he represented the AAFP interest in such a way that he was most effective in keeping the Academy headquarters abreast of the "goings on in Washington." He always remembered "from whence he came" and did not mind reminding others when their action made some suspect that they had forgotten.

Among the national government health agencies in which he participated were the Surgeon General's Conference Preview of Disability of Arthritis and the Surgeon General's Conference on Health (Medicine). He was medical advisor to the Appalachian Regional Commission and advisor to the United States Public Health Department, the Cancer Control Program, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the Medical Assistant's Advisory Commission.

I shall miss Amos greatly and I suspect that there are many others who will join with me to thank God for the life of Dr. Amos Johnson who so ably carried more than his share of the burdens of medicine and of life. His impact will be long remembered, and, in one of the Departments of Family Practice in his native state, a Chair in Family Practice is being established in his name. What a wonderful tribute to a great American!

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