Samuel B. Johnson, MD (1925-2000)

Samuel B. Johnson, MD, first chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson, drowned in a rafting accident on the Green River in Utah on the afternoon of May 12, 2000, at age 74 years.

A native of Canyon, Tex, Dr Johnson earned his bachelor of science degree in chemistry at West Texas State College in Canyon, and he acquired his MD at Tulane University in New Orleans, La. He interned at Knoxville General Hospital in Tennessee, and then took his residency in ophthalmology at Tulane University in the New Orleans Eyes, Ears, Nose, and Throat Hospital. During the Korean War, he was chief of the eyes, ears, nose, and throat service at the US Army Hospital in Fort Sills, Okla, and at the US Navy Hospital in Quantico, Va.

Dr Johnson began practicing ophthalmology in Jackson, Miss, in 1953. When the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMC) opened in 1955, he joined the faculty as chief of the Division of Ophthalmology in the Department of Surgery, and chief of the hospital's ophthalmology service. He became chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology in 1987 when the division was elevated to department status, and remained chairman until he stepped down in February 2000. He then continued to teach and practice medicine at UMC.

Dr Johnson served as chairman of the mid-South section of the Association of Research and Vision in Ophthalmology. He served as president of the International Association of Secretaries of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngological Societies; the Mississippi Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Association; the James H. Allen Residents’ Society; and the Louisiana/Mississippi Ophthalmological and Otolaryngological Society.

He served as a consultant to many organizations, including the Research and Development Center of the National Industries for the Blind, the Federal Aviation Administration Southeastern Area, and the Medical Advisory Board of the Eye Bank Association of America.

Dr Johnson was a fellow of the American College of Surgeons, the Academy of Ophthalmology, and the Law Science Academy of America. He was the author of many professional papers and contributed a chapter on ophthalmic emergencies to *Rhoads Textbook of Surgery, 5th Edition*.

In 1998, Dr Johnson, who was medical director of the Mississippi Lions Eye Bank, was recognized with the Lions Club International Foundation’s Melvin Johns Fellowship Award. The award is given to individuals who are committed to the organization’s humanitarian objectives.

Dr Sam (as he was fondly called) was a true Southern gentleman. He was an excellent politician and a great speaker. He liked to teach, regardless of whether his audience was composed of medical students, residents, or laypeople. He loved being involved in the problem-solving process for previous residents and ophthalmological colleagues, helping both with professional and personal problems. Dr Sam would stand up for important political issues supported by the state ophthalmological community during legislative sessions. Within his department, he was unfailingly supportive of his staff’s career development.

All in all, Dr Sam single-handedly established an outstanding ophthalmological teaching program in the state of Mississippi. He constantly strived to make sure that the program progressed in the way that it should. He was not only a teacher, an ophthalmologist, and an administrator, but most importantly, he was a warm human being. He will be greatly missed by his students, his former residents, the state and national ophthalmological community, and his patients.

Ching J. Chen, MD
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