

news THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT DALLAS

Southwestern medical school - graduate school of biomedical sciences - school of allied health sciences

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*****Former dean and charter faculty
member of Southwestern Medical
School retires.

The man who is credited with guiding Southwestern Medical School through 12 of its most difficult years retires September 1.

A charter member of Southwestern's faculty, Dr. A.J. Gill served as dean of the medical school, now a component of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas, from 1955 until 1967.

Dr. Gill guided the school as it emerged from temporary buildings on Oak Lawn, where it began in 1943, into its first permanent building at the present location on Harry Hines. He is also noted for the building of a clinical faculty, the faculty who give the medical students their clinical training in their last two years.

Now professor of pathology, Dr. Gill will soon be professor emeritus. He will do some teaching, but his professional activities will be focused on writing a series of essays on medical education and medical school administration.

"I've learned a lot of things that are interesting to me, and maybe they'll be interesting to others," he said.

For one thing, he believes Southwestern's early record proves that the most important ingredient in education is the quality of the student. Stories about life in the "barracks" are part of the history and tradition of the school.

"But the history is pallid compared to the way it was. The physical plant had to be seen to be believed. The buildings were built of plywood and concrete and blocks with a minimum amount of plumbing and wiring. In the winter we had to wear overcoats in the lab. Someone once fell through the floor, literally fell through the floor. A prospective donor wanted to give us the money for an electron microscope--and this was back when hardly anybody had an electron microscope. We had to turn it down because we had no place where the floor was strong enough to mount it," Dr. Gill said.

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He expresses amazement at the quality of physicians the school turned out while occupying the "barracks" which were so close to the railroad track that the lecturer had to stop and wait for the train to go by. While he takes pride in the "superstar" graduates, the ones who get a lot of recognition for their research, he is especially proud of the graduates who are delivering good medical services in the community because "educating physicians is what we are about."

In announcing the establishment of a \$100,000 endowment for the A.J. Gill Professorship in Pathology, President Charles Sprague praised Dr. Gill for the excellent "town-gown" relationship the school enjoys.

"Through the years there has been a most cordial relationship between the full-time medical school faculty and the practicing physicians in the Dallas community. Dr. Gill can take a great deal of the credit for fostering and nurturing this relationship which has been so important in our education and patient care programs," said Dr. Sprague.

He said the school is indebted to Dr. Gill for his "many contributions which were so crucial in the development of the school through a difficult transitional period."

Dr. Andres Goth, chairman of the Pharmacology Department and long-time friend and colleague, said Dr. Gill was a good dean.

"He was informal and quick in making decisions and in letting you do what you thought was right. He hired the majority of the top clinical professors we have now," said Dr. Goth.

Teaching, however, is Dr. Gill's first love, and as a teacher, he is much loved by his students.

"The students treasured the gentle bits of philosophy and the witty 'Gillisms' he dispensed with practical information," said Dr. Alice Smith, professor of pathology and a member of the first class at Southwestern Medical College. She said Dr. Gill was a good lecturer, "easy to follow and with a wide background of experience."

"His use of the English language is very effective," she said. She praised him for his vision as dean and for his leadership of the school during a period of growing pains.

Dr. Gill is a "walking encyclopedia," not only of medicine, but also of trivia, according to another member of the first class, Dr. Elgin Ware, clinical associate professor of surgery and past president of the Dallas County Medical Society.

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"He knows the source of any quotation," said Dr. Ware.

Besides serving as dean and as professor of pathology, Dr. Gill has also served as acting chairman of the Department of Pathology, associate dean and acting dean. He now serves as vice-president of the Texas Medical Association.

Dr. Gill received his M.D. degree from Duke University and served his residency at St. Paul Hospital in Dallas.

In 1965 he received the Caldwell Award for his work in pathology. In 1968 he received the Texas Medical Association's Distinguished Service Award, the highest honor given by the association.

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