

## IN MEMORY OF DR. DON W. CHAPMAN

William L. Winters

*From Methodist DeBakey Heart Center, Houston, Texas*

Don W. Chapman was born in Bridgeport, Iowa, on May 21, 1916, and died in his Houston home on May 3, 2007. The 14th physician in a consecutive line of Chapman men dating back four generations, Dr. Chapman is best remembered for his extraordinary teaching skills by literally hundreds of physicians who came under his influence as medical students during the formative years of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. His teaching skills in the classroom and at the bedside became the source of extraordinary stories and, over the years, Baylor bestowed numerous honors upon him. In the eyes of many he was the “compleat physician” and was recognized as such in 1996 by the Harris County Medical Society’s highest award — the John P. McGovern Compleat Physician Award.

After graduation from the University of Iowa Medical School, Chapman pursued his training in medicine and cardiology in Philadelphia, Boston, Michigan and Iowa. In 1944, he joined Baylor as one of its original 10 academic faculty. He left the school to serve in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during the Korean War as a major and a consultant in cardiovascular disease in the European Theater, stationed first at the 5th General Hospital and later the 98th General Hospital. Upon his return to Houston, he continued as a clinical professor with Baylor College of Medicine while establishing a private practice in cardiology with privileges at the Methodist, St. Lukes, and Hermann hospitals. He was joined initially by Drs. Paul Peterson and H. Liston Beazley (both Baylor graduates and both now deceased) and later by several more cardiologists distinguished in their own right. This group became widely known as “The Chapman Group” and



later more officially as “The Houston Cardiovascular Associates.”

As a clinician and clinic investigator in the early days of cardiology, Dr. Chapman’s skills were complimentary to those of Drs. Michael E. DeBakey and Denton Cooley in their work at The Methodist Hospital and St. Lukes Episcopal Hospital. Dr. Chapman opened the first cardiac catheterization laboratory in the South and was instrumental in obtaining financing for the first catheterization laboratory at The Methodist Hospital in Houston. The first patient to undergo cardiac transplantation at St. Luke’s Hospital by Dr. Cooley was a patient of the Chapman group. He also played a pivotal role in bringing echocardiography to Houston by recruiting William L. Winters, Jr., MD, a pioneer in the field at that time. Through the years Dr. Chapman served his profession unselfishly in a variety of roles, including that of president of a diverse group of medical societies including The Southern Society for Clinical Research, The Houston Chapter of the American Heart Association, The Texas Club of Internists, The Texas Academy of Internal Medicine, Houston Society of Internal Medicine, and The Doctors

Club of Houston. He served as governor from South Texas with the American College of Physicians and the American College of Cardiology. He served on the board of trustees of the American College of Cardiology and was local chairman at two annual meetings of the American College of Cardiology in the early 1970’s. He was awarded the title of Master by the American College of Cardiology and the American College of Physicians. In 1985 he received the first Laureate Award given by the Texas Chapter of the American College of Physicians. In 1990 the Chapman Chair of Cardiology was established and awarded to the chairman of the department of cardiology at Baylor College of Medicine. In 1996 an Annual Chapman Lectureship was established at The Methodist Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine. He served as visiting professor in medical schools throughout the world and authored more than 100 original medical papers, co-authored a medical text book and, after retirement, produced three historical books entitled *Hearts, Helicopters and Houston, Second Opinion*, and *Above it All*.

Lest one mistakenly believes Dr. Chapman worked all the time, I recall well his philosophy expressed freely to all who listened: “We work hard and we play hard.” At that time he played the coronet in a local amateur big band called “The Heartbeats,” featuring Denton Cooley on the bass, George Zeluff on the trombone and Louis Green on the piano, among other well-known physicians in the community.

He was a ferocious tennis player, daring anyone to return his blistering serve; his wingspan allowed him to cover most of a tennis court with barely moving a step. The First Presbyterian Church was the beneficiary of his

extraordinary wisdom and leadership for half a century. He enjoyed regularly the company of members of the Breakfast Club, the Houston Philosophical Society, the Murphy Lunch Bunch and the Eleven Fellows. He and his charming wife, Mary Louise, were regulars at several Houston dance clubs for many years and at the famous Warwick Hotel when big bands were regularly featured.

Don Chapman is survived by Mary Louise Chapman, his wife of more than sixty years; by his son Dr. D. Robert Chapman, the 15th Chapman physician over five generations, his wife Karla and their two sons Kord and Cass; and by his daughter Nancy, her husband Andrew L. Colb and their daughter Anna. Dr. Chapman was the first of a long line of esteemed cardiovascular specialists in Houston and in Texas. His role as a husband and father, mentor, role model, clinician, friend, and colleague through his 60 years of influence in this community and this country has firmly established his credentials as the Compleat Physician.

*Dr. William L. Winters, Jr.*