

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION ON THE DEATH OF DR. ALFRED C. BECK

Presented before the New York Obstetrical Society

October 9, 1979

Dr. Alfred C. Beck was born in Toledo, Ohio on July 16, 1885 and died on March 22, 1979 in his 94th year. He married his wife Miss Rhea Bennett, and enjoyed a loving relationship with her for 63 years. He was a graduate of the University of Michigan Medical School in 1910 and interned at Johns Hopkins Hospital. In 1912 he came to Brooklyn to be the first resident in the Department of Ob-Gyn at the Long Island College Hospital under Dr. John O. Polak, whom he succeeded in 1930 as Chairman of the Department of Ob-Gyn at the hospital and the medical school.

He contributed many papers to the literature. Noteworthy were those on revision of the technique for the lower segment cesarean section and the treatment of abdominal pregnancy.

He was principally responsible for indicating the need for great care in the avoidance of manipulation of the placenta in certain cases

of abdominal pregnancy when no plane of cleavage can be found, and piecemeal extirpation of the placenta is likely to result in considerable hemorrhage and possibly death. He advised simply tying of the cord and leaving the placenta within the abdominal cavity to become absorbed.

He was a member of many local and national societies which I shall not read to you, but are appended to this resolution.

I come now to the truly great achievements of this extraordinary man. While reserved and somewhat formal; and at times a demanding perfectionist, it was in the field of teaching that he made his truly great contribution to our specialty. The teaching of medical students and residents consumed him. His book "Obstetrical Practice" was written with excellence achieved by few men in our specialty. It became well known that medical students who graduated from the Long Island College of Medicine possessed a knowledge of Ob-Gyn which was extraordinary and could not be excelled by students from any other medical school.

His method of teaching was sometimes unique, but very effective. But it was book which was his greatest achievement. He wrote as he taught, simply, concisely, and after he had digested the literature, rather than enumerating the detailed results of other investigators. His illustrations, and in particular those of the mechanism of labor are classic.

He argued with the publishers in regard to the price of the book, for he wished it to be sold as cheaply as possible, so that students could afford to buy it. He was not interested in royalties. It was not unusual for medical students at other schools (where other texts were recommended) to buy his textbook for they found it was most helpful in their studies.

Beck's "Obstetrics" to this day represents one of the finest books in obstetrics, and is under the very able authorship of Dr. E. Stewart Taylor.

For those who knew Dr. Beck there can be no doubt that we have truly lost a great man.

SOCIETIES

Fellow of the American Gynecologic Society

Fellow of the American College of Surgeons

Diplomate of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology

American Gynecologic Society

Member of the South Atlantic Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology

American Medical Association

New York Academy of Medicine

New York State Medical Society

Fellow of New York Obstetric Society

Brooklyn Gynecologic Society

Medical Society of the County of Kings, Brooklyn, New York