

THE NEW YORK OBSTETRICAL SOCIETY

DR. GILBERT JAY VOSBURGH

Gilbert Jay Vosburgh was born on March 16, 1917 in Canajoharie, New York. He was the eldest son of Vorhees and Anna Vosburgh; of Dutch ancestry.

His early education was in Canajoharie, a small village in upper New York State. He was an avid student, interested in science, particularly chemistry, and he completed his high school education in three years. He attended Princeton University, where he majored in Chemistry, and graduated cum laude in 1938. While at college his extra-curricular interests were devoted to the Princeton Triangle Club, the student theatrical organization.

Following Princeton he attended medical school at Johns Hopkins, where he was a member of A.O.A., and received his medical degree in June of 1942. From 1942 to 1946 he served his internship and residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Johns Hopkins under Dr. Eastman and Dr. Te Linde. During this period he also spent six months in pathology with Dr. Arthur Hertig in Boston. He never lost his devotion to these giants of our specialty who so influenced his formative training.

Upon completion of his residency he was appointed to the teaching staff of Johns Hopkins. Gil's interest in chemistry had continued, and now focused on the use of radioactive isotopes as a research tool. He became associated with Dr. Louis Flexner of the Department of Anatomy at Johns Hopkins and together they published a number of basic scientific papers, particularly in relation to iron metabolism.

In 1950, only four years away from his residency, Gil was appointed professor and chairman of obstetrics and gynecology at Western Reserve School of Medicine in Cleveland. He brought to Western Reserve innovative concepts in the structure of an academic department, many of which were forerunners of what are standard formats today.

Although Gil had not been eligible for military service during World War II because of rheumatic heart disease, with the outbreak of the Korean war, he was inducted into active duty with the army medical corps in 1953. He served with the rank of Major as Chief of the Laboratory Division, and Chief of the Physiology Section, Surgical Research Unit, at Brooke Army Medical Center.

Upon his discharge in 1955, he was recruited by Dr. Howard Taylor, Jr. to the Sloane Hospital for Women where he served as associate professor of OB/GYN until his retirement in June of 1983.

Although his research activities gradually diminished over these years, he established himself as one of the leading teachers of classical obstetrics and the physiology of pregnancy. In the latter years, in conjunction with psychiatry, he taught the course for medical students on human sexuality. In recognition of

his excellence and devotion to teaching, Gil was honored as teacher of the year by the resident staff in June of 1982.

Gil was a conscientious practitioner, primarily interested in obstetrical practice. Except when on vacation, he practiced alone, and his patients knew they could always reach him, night or day, seven days a week, and they responded in their devotion to him.

In September 1941 while a senior in medical school, Gil married Barbara Spraker, whom he had known since their childhood days in Canajoharie. They subsequently had two children, Linda and Gilbert Jr., both delivered by Dr. Eastman. Gil was primarily home oriented in his non-medical activities. He was an avid reader of both medical and classical literature. He excelled in woodworking, but his major interest was his garden. I can testify to the magnificence of his vegetable garden, which supplied not only the Vosburghs, but many of their friends' tables, including our own. His other hobby was sailing. He pappedered an old wooden chesepeake sailboat at their summer cottage on Sacanadaga Lake in the Adirondaks, and also enjoyed many sailing expeditions on Cheasepeake Bay with his family and old friend, Dr. Flexner.

In the last 25 years of his life, Gil was plagued with his cardiac problem. In 1974 he underwent an aortic valve replacement, from which he narrowly recovered. The valve proved to be one of the defective types, later recognized, and in 1978 he was faced with the decision of a replacement. With characteristic courage he accepted this. His enjoyment of life and his profession far outweighed any fear of death. Fortunately, his second ordeal was both uneventful and successful.

Gil was a member of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Alpha Omega Alpha, and the New York Academy of Sciences. He was an honorary member of the Washington State Obstetrical Society and the New Jersey Obstetrical and Gynecological Society. His main society interests, however, were with the Society for Gynecological Investigation and the New York Obstetrical Society, of which he was a Life Fellow.

Gil died quietly at home on Saturday, February 2, 1985, following a short cardiac exacerbation. We have lost an illustrious physician, a good friend and a devoted member of this Society.

W. Duane Todd, M.D.