



## RIVERSIDE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Formerly, Houston Negro Hospital, Houston, Texas

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The Riverside General Hospital, formerly the Houston Negro Hospital has experienced many ups and downs. In its first years it grazed in 'green pastures,' but in a few following years it suffered from scientific malnutrition and other ills. In about 1940 the Rosenwald Fund sent Dr. Midian O. Bousfield, their chief liaison man for Negro affairs, to inspect the hospital. My friend of many years, Dr. Bousfield, a graduate of Northwestern University and a protégé of Dr. Joseph B. de Lee, the famed obstetrician, once stated in correspondence which dealt with the professional potentialities of Houston, "The Houston Negro Hospital is a hopeless situation. Their Board is very stubborn and adamant." In all fairness, in future relationships with the Board the present writer did not really find this to be true, although the Board thought Dr. Albert W. Dent of Dillard was our only hospital authority of any stature.

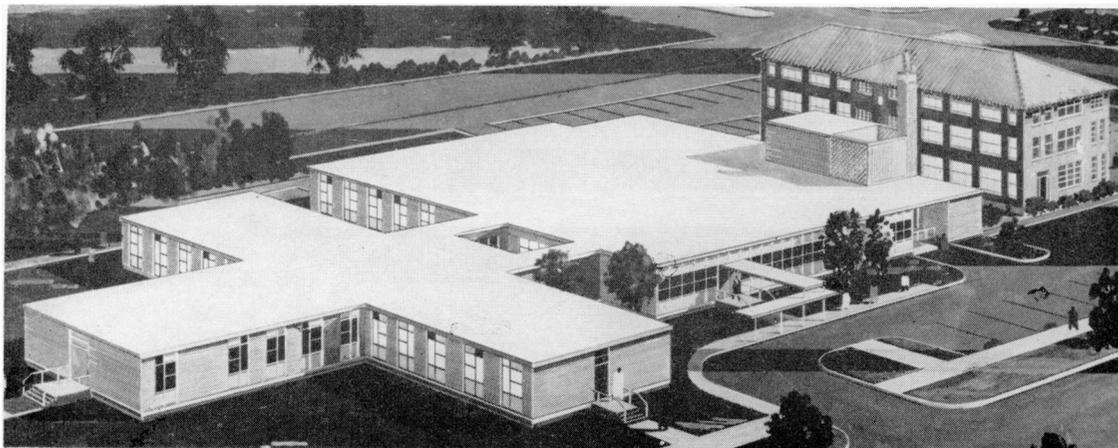
A few years later the Baylor School of Medicine suggested a survey to be made by Dr. Joseph L. Johnson, professor of physiology at Howard University Medical School. He made a careful and painstaking survey of all

facets of activity. The survey fell on deaf ears among the local authorities. "They just didn't know the facts of life."

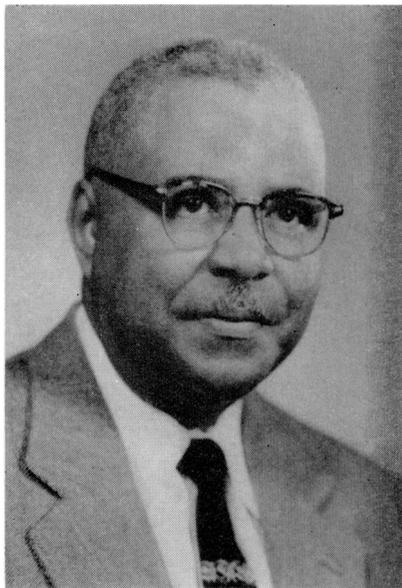
The Houston Negro Hospital was built in 1927. The new building got off to a good start. There were many optimistic predictions. Chief among which was the idea that this hospital would of necessity become a scientific mecca for the South. It was considered a great milestone in the improvement of our hospital facilities, with a destiny of becoming "our place" to serve and work. This was a clean and decent place to be sick and die.

Ironically, however, in spite of the improved hospital conditions, the building was not constructed to be an efficient, adequate and usable building. Even in 1927 it was outmoded.

The name, "Houston Negro Hospital" well exemplifies the discriminatory, segregative and racist climate of Houston in the late twenties. "You are right as long as you stay in your place." All public schools with colored students were named in like fashion, for example, the "Phyllis Wheatley High School for Negroes."



The Riverside General Hospital today. New section to left. Renovated old building at right.



Dr. E. B. Perry, past president Lone Star State Medical Association and Houston Medical Forum, also former chief of Surgery.

Today, such stigmata are just about erased and there is a noticeable absence of, "For Colored," over restrooms, drinking fountains, etc. in public buildings.

#### THE HOUSE HOSPITAL

The Hospital began in a remodeled house in 1919. This place as would be expected, had limited facilities and sparse equipment. It was located in the Fourth Ward of Houston, naturally one of our ghettos.

Dr. Rupert Roett, fresh from the hospital at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, became really the house doctor for this house-hospital. He was not married and spent 18 profitable months here for Houston and the profession. Subsequently he married Miss Katherine Bonita Bryant, a graduate of Wiley College. She was the daughter of Reverend Bryant, district superintendent of the Galveston-Houston District of the Methodist Church. Dr. Roett, even after developing a large and lucrative practice, each night went by the hospital to see "how things were getting along."

Dr. Rupert Rouett was for many years the only Texan to serve on the Executive Board of the National Medical Association.

Self taught surgeons started performing surgical procedures in this house-hospital. The leading practitioners, were Drs. H. E. Lee, E. J. Covington, Rupert Roett, William Drake, F. Stone.

In this group Dr. Roett possessed the best hospital training, for he had served under Dr. John A. Kenney, Sr., and was the first president of the John A. Andrew Hospital at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. Dr. Roett through the years has maintained superb ethics and loyalty to constructive and progressive moves, beamed to improve and develop in our quest for professional excellence.

About this same time, Dr. James Franklin took over the medical chores at Prairie View A & M College, Prairie View, Texas. Dr. Lee made weekly visits to Prairie View. These men became fast and confidential friends, at least above the surface, and in National Medical Association circles they were "men of distinction." Dr. Lee was an unsurpassed self-promoter and could boast at times. Dr. Franklin was a quiet and humble man, usually unassuming, and was well liked and admired by all of his colleagues. He was affectionately called "Jim Franklin of Prairie View."

#### TRANSITION FROM HOUSE HOSPITAL TO THE HOUSTON NEGRO HOSPITAL

This change of hospital workshop was brought about by a strange twist of human relations. There were really two house improvisations which were called "hospitals" in Houston. Our men were opening hospitals in many sections of the South, e.g. in Memphis Dr. John T. Wilson and also Dr. Terrell had hospitals, in Atlanta. Dr. Johnson had a hospital. Dr. Daniel H. Williams started Provident Hospital in Chicago. While in New Orleans, Dr. Rivers Frederick, a quiet, prominent surgeon, was chief of surgical activities in a segregated hospital. Our men had nowhere to work. They got tired of being denied opportunities, so they made their own situations for advancement in the treatment and practice of medicine and surgery.

The first house hospital situation in 1919 was more or less a place with hospital beds, little or no laboratory; each surgeon was a king of his own domain. Surgery was emphasized more than good medicine. It was glamorous looking and intriguing to our doctors. There was another house hospital started by a preacher—evangelist



Dr. Benjamin J. Covington. For biographical story see this *Journal*, v. 55, pp. 462-463, 1963.

named "Jeremiah." The people thought he had unusual powers, to make the paralyzed walk, the blind to see, the speechless to talk and so on. His following finally divided and dwindled away and he lost his hospital. Jeremiah then began selling his followers "numbers" to be played in "Policy." So the house hospital moved to Jeremiah's Hospital. It was still just the "Negro Hospital."

The president of the Houston Junior College For Negroes, Dr. W. M. Terrell, was a great fund raiser for the Junior College. Following his dismissal as president of the College his aid was solicited to raise money for the Negro Hospital. This task he accepted. The house-hospital needed a laundry. Terrell went to oil-man Cullinan to get money for the laundry equipment. Cullinan knew about the hospital, because his cook had been a surgical patient. Cullinan agreed to furnish the laundry for the house-hospital, and as the attempt was made to install the laundry the walls started tumbling down. The building was not strong enough for such installation. Professor Terrell returned to Cullinan and told of the misfortune. Cullinan agreed to build a hospital, the Houston Negro Hospital, in memory of his son, Lieut. Cullinan, killed at Metz, Germany during World War I, and a Nurse's Home Building, in memory of his wife. One million dollars made the endowment, and Cullinan personally planted the trees and shrubbery. The building was a replica of a hospital seen in South America by Cullinan. There were large screened porches on each floor of the three story building. The screened porches were a waste of space and material. Obstetrics was on the first floor and the operating room on the top floor. The hospital was in a beautiful landscaped setting. There was no attempt at adequate departmental developments such as x-ray, laboratory, pediatric, dietary and pharmaceutical categories. There were no staff organization and little or no records of patients treated, operated or observed in the hospital.

Surgery was the chief item of business, and obstetrics was second in terms of patient load, because several physicians were doing home deliveries even in the late twenties.

About 1925 Drs. Thelma Patten and Charles Wesley Pemberton appeared on the professional scene. There was immediately formed a triad of mutual interests between Lee, Pemberton and Patten. It was quite a formidable coalition. Dr. Thelma Patten became the first woman president of the Lone Star State Medical Association. Drs. Patten and Pemberton have both worked hard in civic and medical society circles. Dr. Patten became an obstetrician of note and was taught some surgery by Lee. There were other physicians in Houston during this time, Drs. Lankford, Lindsey, Antoine, Overton, Bryant, Osborne, Farrell and A. E. Jones.

Dr. Osborn became principal of Prairie View Institute in 1918 and founded the Division of Nursing Education. The previously mentioned Dr. Overton, who looked like an Indian, gathered together large real estate holdings. Dr. Farrell, who first came to Houston when the population was only 4,000 people, practiced in his drug



Dr. H. E. Lee, professional leader in Houston for many years and former president of National Medical Association.

store building and prospered. Dr. J. Lankford at various times owned three different drug stores.

Most of the men were not interested in hospital practice. They made good money, mostly by just holding and participating in friendly conversations with their patients. There were also Dr. Lawson, father of two sons, who are now physicians, Dr. John Lawson of Houston and Dr. James Lawson, a surgical resident in training.

Dr. Lee was fortunate in having been tutored by a surgeon of renown, Dr. James, who owned a stable of race horses and was a director of several banks. Lee's parents had been tenant farmers on a farm adjacent to the ranch owned by the Hill family. Hill had led Lee into the operating rooms of the old Jefferson Davis County Hospital and dared anyone to object to this man of color being present and to be "in the field."

Dr. Lee was the only colored physician on the Jefferson Davis Hospital staff.

Lee developed great influence at the Houston Negro Hospital, his words or decisions were never questioned. He was humble and demonstrated humility in social and professional relationships.

During this period, administration of the hospital was shared by Mrs. Bright, superintendent of nurses, who was a graduate of the John A. Andrew Hospital in Tuskegee, Alabama.

In 1932 Dr. Walter Minor came to Houston fresh from one year at Hubbard Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Minor had planned to go back to Minnesota where he had finished Medicine, at the University of Minnesota. He was a classmate of Dr. John Chenault, formerly head of the Polio Service at Tuskegee. Dr. Minor has through the years meant much to the present

state of affairs of Riverside General Hospital. Dr. Roett also practiced successfully as a gentleman and a scholar.

Other men practicing occasionally in the hospital included Dr. T. M. Shadowen's, the manufacturer of Shadolax. During World War II—production was stopped, due to the fact that certain ingredients could not be obtained from Hawaii. Dr. Lankford had a little hospital practice, and was highly regarded. In his closing years he was tremendously interested in heart disease and hypertension.

Many of the men would send their very sick patients to the Jefferson Davis County Hospital. The hospital roster included also, Dr. Albert Bowie, Dr. Hackett and Dr. G. P. A. Forde. Most of the anesthesia was given by Dr. Forde.

Practically all of the men in Houston achieved material success without serious hospital affiliation or participation.

The white doctors brought their good patients to the hospital and also carried other patients to segregated white hospitals.

#### THE NEW ERA

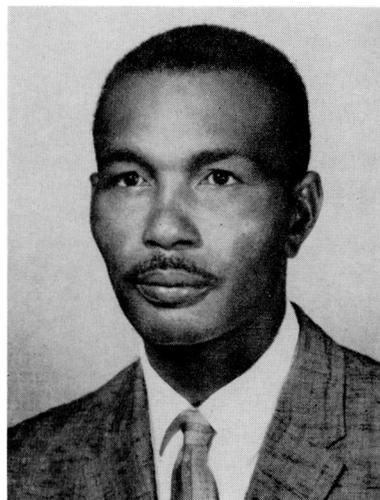
As the old men "were fading away" there appeared on the horizon a group of younger men which included P. W. Beal, A. W. Beal, Walter Minor, E. B. Perry, H. Lyman, J. D. Bowles, F. H. LeGall, John Madison, O. E. Floyd, John Wells, Carl Carroll, Howard Williams, Edith Brooks, Robert Bacon, and T. C. Fletcher.

#### DR. J. E. PERRY

In 1964 Dr. J. E. Perry extended his period of active medical duty, coming out of retirement for some 15 years, to assist in the rehabilitation of the Houston Negro Hospital and to shed professional light in a fast developing medical desert. "Dr. J. E." would only accept the position after unanimous request by vote of the entire colored professional group. The first accomplishment by Dr. Perry was acquisition of a capable business manager, Cletus Birchette from Lincoln University in Missouri. Mr. Birchette is now comptroller of Atlanta University. Next an affiliation was formed with the Baylor University School of Medicine, through Dr. Wallace, professor of pathology there.

The acquisition of Warren D. Davis as laboratory technician was a timely asset to the Houston Negro Hospital. For many years he did the work of several people in his attempts to raise the scientific level of our laboratory procedures. He was always "on call," though he lived quite a distance from the hospital. Now the Laboratory is one of the hospital's strongest assets.

In the interim Dr. J. E. Perry formed a beneficial acquaintance with Dr. James A. Greene, professor of medicine at the Baylor School of Medicine. Dr. Greene in turn established clinics in medicine and surgery, and sent two of his best men in medicine and two in surgery, from the medical school. Dr. Greene was president of the hospital staff and held this position for six



Warren D. Davis, B.S., head of Laboratory Services.

years with Dr. E. B. Perry as secretary. The meetings became more scientific and informative, included monthly staff discussions of infections and deaths.

The medical school came to respect our staff and before long, there was a good working relationship.

The staff wanted a better hospital. Meetings were held with the Hospital board members and interested professionals. We did not get too far after about two years of this strategy. Finally Dr. Minor, as good a surgeon as one would want to see and without doing a residency, instituted the formation and preparation of an ultimatum.

We applied for accreditation while Dr. Greene was president of the Staff, for his weight and stature would not do our cause any harm. Full accreditation was granted. The records were constantly improving and our mortality and morbidity levels reflected great im-



DR. JAMES A. GREENE

provement. Hopes were raised beyond what many had expected, yet with this great deal of hope there was some worry, that we would keep moving and not become "satisfied," after our accreditation.

#### A TIME OF AWAKENING

Our staff men were now beginning outwardly to demonstrate dissatisfaction and humiliation in working in such an outmoded and shabby building. The Texas Medical Center was being developed about this time, with no financial problems, and there was talk of moving us to the Medical Center. This idea was quite controversial. About this same time we started knocking at two doors, namely the Staff of the Jefferson Davis Hospital and the Harris County Medical Society. This effort was spearheaded by veterans Drs. C. W. Pemberton, P. W. Beal and E. B. Perry. Many other senior physicians remained quiet passive. This group compiled four sets of applications, with only one member a certified specialist (in Ophthalmology), Dr. Tom Fletcher, who finished Howard over 50 years ago, leading the list. Other applications demonstrated years of post-graduate training and experience, but no board certifications. These applications were placed in the same mail and registered, being sent 1) to the County Commissioners, 2) to the Houston City Council, 3) the Harris County Medical Society and 4) to the Secretary of the staff of Jefferson Davis Hospital. This surprise action and attack evoked much concern among our non-colored professional associates and others.

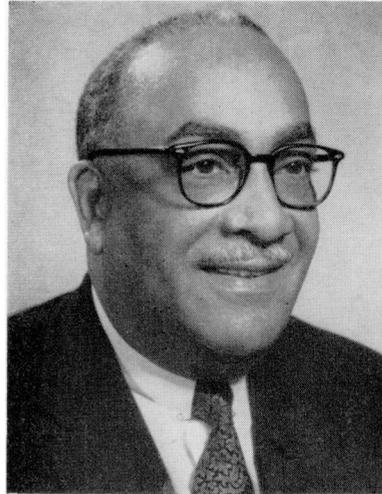
#### A QUICK TRANSITION

The staff management of Jefferson Davis Hospital was rapidly turned over to the Baylor School of Medicine. Now, in order for us to qualify for anything medically inter-racial, we were required to have membership in the Harris County Medical Society and also board certification. This closed all doors, notwithstanding our experience and proved ability.

Dr. John Madison, who had worked faithfully in the medical clinics and medical wards of the Houston Negro Hospital completed residency training in medicine, at the Veteran's Facility in Houston. He accomplished this feat with credit and made contributions to the literature while doing this residency. He is currently a member of the Medical Department of Baylor Medical School and this automatically puts him on Ben Taub Hospital Staff.

The vigorous efforts for a better hospital provoked a token renovation of the Houston Negro Hospital. It was air-conditioned at great expense, painted and a few partitions were placed here and there for patient privacy. We were all aware of the stern limitations involved in the achievement of our objectives. There was a big job to be done.

The million dollar endowment fund had dwindled and could only be used for expansion or physical improvements. The Board approved expenditure of money for certain equipment. The fund decreased to about one quarter million of dollars.



Dr. Walter Minor, formerly president of Staff and chief of Surgery.

We became Hill-Burton conscious and made application for a loan. Our Board made two trips to Austin, the state capital, to plead our case before the State Board of Health, without success. Finally a combination of strategic actions was used. Dr. Walter Minor was the physician of the Honorable Mark Hannah, then president of the Board of Texas Southern University, who made certain contacts. Eventually the request for Hill-Burton money was allowed, a much more sizable sum than we had asked for was granted to our hospital. This action gave many of us new courage and it was now being evidenced that our scientific progress was being balanced by an advancement in human relations.

#### EARLY HOUSE STAFF

Dr. Osborne E. Floyd, our first house physician, was a protege of Dr. J. E. Perry and would without hesita-



DR. OSBORNE E. FLOYD

tion say, "I wouldn't be a doctor, but for Dr. J. E." Dr. Floyd was an early riser, loyal, industrious and possessed a sympathetic and highly emotional type of generosity. He did much to mold favorable sentiment for the Houston Negro Hospital.

Dr. Greene of Baylor thought very highly of Osborne. Following the premature death of Dr. Osborne all were saddened. He was a great loss to our staff. He ran interference, letting others carry the ball and receive the accolades.

Dr. Walter Minor, one of the early house officers, was a keen student who worked diligently in every capacity. He brought to the hospital a high level of professional performance.

Our next house physician was Dr. John Wells, who demonstrated skill in practical psychology. Dr. Wells remained only six months, building a large practice. He moved to Kansas City, Mo. and did a residency in internal medicine at Kansas University Medical School Hospital. Currently he is leading internist in K. C., Mo. Dr. Wells is practicing in Menorah Hospital, a large Jewish Hospital.

Our last house physician was Dr. C. Carroll. Dr. Carroll is well trained and consequently is an excellent practitioner. He is now chairman of the Board of the Riverside National Bank. He is a rare combination of good business man and physician.

ADMINISTRATION

James A. Robinson came to Houston as a well qualified and experienced hospital administrator. He was moved into the new building on March 19, 1961. Gradually the administration has put into practice new and efficient procedures. Mr. Robinson has been fortunate in having on his staff a head nurse, Mrs. A. Hardy, with whom a smooth working relationship has been established.



Dr. Edison Banfield, chief of surgery.

THE FUTURE

Our future should be rich in promise and achievement. We have staff men whose preparation and training have been excellent. One of our men performed a successful operation on an aneurysm of the abdominal aorta, Dr. Edison Banfield who was trained at Howard University. He has contributed to medical literature, along with Dr. Catherine J. E. Roett, eminent pediatrician, trained at Howard, and Dr. Joseph C. Gathe, trained at St. Louis University.

There is now a wholesome exchange of ideas and there are terrific impacts to progress by such keen and intelligent personalities, who are either certified or board qualified.



Dr. Rupert Roett and Dr. Katherine Roett, a father-daughter team.

STAFF

General Surgery

- E. H. Banfield, F. A. C. S., Howard University
- Joseph C. Gathe, F. A. C. S., St. Louis University
- Herman Barnett, University of Texas
- Louis Robey, F. A. C. S., Meharry Medical College
- Walter Minor, University of Minnesota
- E. B. Perry, Howard University
- Cecil Harold, University of Texas

George Johnson, Meharry Medical College  
 Richard Horton, Howard University  
 A. W. Beal, Meharry Medical College

*General Practice*

A. E. Jones, Meharry Medical College  
 Franklyn Jones, Meharry Medical College  
 Rawls Andrews, Meharry Medical College  
 F. H. LeGall, Meharry Medical College  
 John Lawson, Meharry Medical College  
 J. H. Pendleton, University of Texas  
 William Parker, Howard University  
 J. S. Stone, Howard University  
 Earl Lombard, Meharry Medical College  
 Ruppert Roett, Meharry Medical College  
 C. W. Pemberton, Meharry Medical College  
 Michael Banfield, Howard University  
 Jarvis Whitfield, Meharry Medical College  
 John D. Dowles, Meharry Medical College  
 H. J. Lyman, Meharry Medical College  
 C. P. A. Forde, Meharry Medical College

*Pediatrics*

Catherine J. E. Roett, Howard University  
 Clarence R. Higgins, Meharry Medical College

*Orthopedics*

Louis Robey, Meharry Medical College

*Urology*

Robert Bacon, Meharry Medical College

*Anesthesia*

Lectoy Johnson, Howard University  
 Hilton Wilson, Howard University

*Medicine*

John Madison, Meharry Medical College  
 Edna Brooks, Meharry Medical College  
 Edith Jones, University of Arkansas

*Gynecology and Obstetrics*

John B. Coleman, Howard University  
 B. T. Hollins, Meharry Medical College  
 Clemmie Johnson, Meharry Medical College  
 Thelma Patten-Law, Howard University

*Ophthalmology*

T. A. Fletcher, Howard University  
 Jessie D. Hayes, University of Indiana

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR STAFF

Dr. Higgins incidentally was the first non-white resident in the Jefferson Davis Hospital, before "Integration Battlefront," so notably promoted by Dr. W. Montague Cobb had reached these parts. Dr. Higgins served one year and then went to the Navy. He is one of our qualified pediatricians.

We all know that Dr. Catherine Roett, belongs to the American Academy of Pediatrics. She has always been helpful in all worthwhile efforts, such as working in her church, hospital clinics, forming medical programs, etc.

Dr. H. Barnett spent a profitable tour of duty at the University of Texas Medical School in the early days of desegregation. This writer was personally told by the Dean that "Barnett was a gentleman, a good student and well liked by his classmates." He became chief resident in surgery at John Sealy Hospital of the University of Texas Medical School.

Dr. Edith Jones enjoys a large practice. She studied at Veterans here in Houston and also Freedmen's Hospital. She is well qualified, affable and communicative. Her husband is dean of men at Texas Southern University. Dr. Edith Jones serves on several civic organization boards.



Dr. Edith Irby Jones who in 1948 when admitted to the University of Arkansas, became the first Negro medical student accepted by a Southern school.

Dr. Edna Brooks is one of the greatest humanitarians among our group. If charity is the greatest virtue of all, "Dr. Edna" is well ahead of many of us. She is a good doctor, has patience, understanding and is precise in her actions.

Dr. Franklyn Jones of Meharry has been quietly successful in acquiring a large practice in Houston. He calls himself a "general practitioner."

Dr. Rawle Andrews, nephew of Dr. Franklyn Jones, one of our newest additions, developed a large practice in one of Houston's additions, "Acreage Homes."



Dr. Lectoy Johnson, head of the Department of Anesthesiology.

Dr. Lectoy Johnson and his assistant Dr. Hilton Wilson have added much to our service in maintaining an efficient department of Anesthesiology. Recently he served on a Panel at M. D. Anderson Hospital for Treatment of Cancer and Cancer Research. Dr. Johnson is well grounded in internal medicine. He claims Dr. Wendell Lucas, head of Urology at Freedmen's Hospital played a major role in this achievement. Dr. Hilton Wilson gives capable and efficient assistance to Dr. Johnson and is essential to the success of the anesthesia service.

#### REFLECTIONS

A 10 year fight was necessary before entrance into the Harris County Medical Society was achieved.

Dr. Catherine Roett was admitted to the Baylor School of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital staffs, soon after arriving in Houston. This was many years before integration and desegregation took observable form. Dr. Fred Taylor, a prominent Catholic layman, prepared the way for this achievement.

Dr. Edith Jones serves as consultant in the various categories of internal medicine, but chiefly in cardiology, at many of the hospitals in the Texas Medical Center. She has a very large following of patients who love her.

Dr. John Madison, internist, has been one of the strong men of our staff organization. He was secretary during Dr. E. B. Perry's two terms of office as president of the

Houston Medical Forum. Currently he is program chairman of the Staff of Riverside General Hospital. He is a staff member of many hospitals in the Center and is in the front ranks of our leading specialists in internal medicine.

Dr. Edison Banfield was the first of us to become a staff member of Methodist Hospital, the citadel of cardiac surgery for the world. He is on the staff of Dr. Michael DeBakey's surgical department, and is associated with one of our finest surgeons, Dr. Joseph Gathe, of St. Louis University Medical School.

Dr. Robert Bacon, urologist and F.I.C.S. has worked diligently in the "Integration Front" program.

We urgently need a Roentgenologist for this area.

#### OUR NEW HOME

"Riverside General Hospital" was the name agreed upon by the Board and Staff after completion of our new building. We had tried to change the name of the hospital before this time. The old "Houston Negro Hospital" has been completely renovated with more Hill-Burton money and is now appropriately named, the "Cullinan Annex."

Desegregation of many and all of our Catholic institutions has happened in the last two years, due to the coming to Houston of Bishop John Morkosvy, Bishop of the Galveston-Houston Diocese.

#### CONCLUSION

We of today, are indebted first to God and then to the alertness, vigilance, persistence and insistence for recognition, at least, of minimal courtesy, the great tact, diplomacy and vision of our forebears. We should forever remember their sacrifices, periods of remorse and despair, objects of ridicule and sarcasm, but always seeing a light in the darkness and hoping and praying for a better day and a brighter noon day sun.

We must develop a unified front and recognize that only through painful stages will we finally evolve and join the ranks of first class citizens. We should not only project ideas, but should rather seek and favor the reception of ideas.

It has been in our defeats that we have been given our greatest strength. We must reassure each other of our obligations and responsibilities to our fellow-men. Let us have an unbiased disposition to accept leadership.

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**70th Annual Convention, National Medical Association**

**Cincinnati, Ohio, August 9-12, 1965**