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Laurence Sidney Fallis, M.D. 1894-1974



Three years almost to the day from his farewell to Henry Ford Hospital, Dr. Laurence S. Fallis died in his Florida home of cancer of the lung. He had lived six weeks beyond his eightieth birthday. The retired surgeon left the Hospital in 1971 after 46 years of service. Death occurred last March 18 in Pompano Beach.

His career was interesting, checkered and distinguished. It brought him into personal contact with surgeons at every step of the ladder, from the surgical interns of the Henry Ford Hospital and fellow house officers in England to the leaders of surgery in the United States and the world. These and the many patients he cured of surgical ailments will note his passing with a feeling of appreciation for having known him.

He was a great raconteur and to those who have heard his enjoyable tales of early experiences, the bare curriculum vitae in *Who's Who* seems rather bland. He was born in Millbrook, Ontario, on January 29, 1894. Officially, his degrees of M.D. and C.M. were granted by Queen's University of Kingston, Ontario, in 1919, but some of his years of study must have coincided with military service, because it is stated that he served with the Canadian Army Medical Corps in the years 1915-18. There were additional degrees in 1922 of M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. from St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London. There was also postgraduate work in Edinburgh and Vienna. The *Who's Who* sketch adds some confusing overlapping of the above dates, stating that he was a resident in the Ministry of Pension Hospi-

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tal of Toronto in 1919-21, and house surgeon of the Royal Hospital of Portsmouth, England in 1921-24.

He returned to Canada in 1924, and in January, 1925, he started on a trip across the central part of the United States to investigate the opportunities for a young surgeon in Chicago and the Mayo Clinic. He got no further from Toronto than Detroit. An impromptu interview with Dr. Roy D. McClure at the Henry Ford Hospital ended with his being appointed to the general surgical staff. This staff group was small. It included besides Dr. McClure, only Dr. Clyde Allen, Dr. Arthur McGraw and Dr. E. C. Davidson.

In 1928, he had an opportunity for more travel and adventure. Mr. Henry Ford had decided to start a rubber plantation some distance up the Amazon in Brazil. Dr. Fallis accepted the responsibility for the organization of a medical department for the project and remained in Brazil for a year. In 1930, he was married to Miss Dorothy Maloney, a member of the first graduating class of the Henry Ford Hospital School of Nursing (1927). They had two sons, Laurence and Richard.

During the next two decades, he had a busy general surgical practice. With the death of Dr. Allen in 1939, he became surgeon-in-charge of the Division of General Surgery. He had great interest in and wrote many papers on the subjects of inguinal hernia and surgery of the stomach, colon and rectum. With the death of Dr. McClure in 1951, he was named surgeon-in-chief of the Henry Ford Hospital, which post he held until 1966. After that, he remained on the staff as a consultant for five more years.

He was a popular teacher of surgical residents, who will remember especially his frequent reference to pithy surgical

aphorisms, such as "In abdominal pain, it's appendicitis against the field."

Dr. Fallis was a member of many surgical societies. The list includes the Royal College of Surgeons, American College of Surgeons, American Surgical Association, Central Surgical Association and the International Society of Surgery. He was president of the Detroit Academy of Surgery in 1945-46. He was an honorary foreign member of the Sociedad Chilena de Gastro-Enterologia, Sociedad Argentina de Proctologia, and the Sociedad de Cirugia de Guadalajara (Mexico). Other memberships — indicating his breadth of interest — included the Economic Club of Detroit, Los Buenos Vecinos de Detroit (a Spanish-speaking group), and the National Travel Club of New York City.

His hobbies were travel and farming (he owned a farm). In his travels, he frequently returned to Spain, Portugal and Mexico. His farming interests are said to have been profitable, but the surgical residents and the rest of the staff will remember Larry Fallis, the farmer, because of the outings at his farm on Napier Road near Plymouth. The bill of fare was always delicious spare ribs barbecued on a bed spring suspended over a charcoal fire, accompanied by steaming corn on the cob!

Those attending will recall the annual meeting of the American Surgical Association in 1953, at which, as was the custom, the president read the names of the members who had died during the year. But Dr. Dinsmore, of Cleveland, prefaced his reading of the list by saying "Those fellows are laughing at us down here, but the joke is on them. They just think they're dead!" As numerous surgeons of this day practice an art learned at the bedside and across the operating table from Larry Fallis, they, too, will testify that he lives on.

CONRAD R. LAM, M.D.