

Founding of the John Staige Davis Society of Plastic Surgeons of Maryland, Inc.

The John Staige Davis Society of Plastic Surgeons of Maryland was formally founded on March 10, 1971 with the election of its first slate of officers: Robert W. Johnson, III, MD, of Baltimore, President; John C. Clark, MD, of Hagerstown, Vice-President; and Stanley Klatsky, MD, of Baltimore, Secretary-Treasurer. The charter members of the new society are: Elliott M. Berg, MD, John C. Clark, MD, Raymond M. Curtis, MD, W. Bowdoin Davis, MD, Frederick C. Hansen, Jr., MD, John E. Hoopes, MD, Michael E. Jabaley, MD, Arthur R. Jasion, MD, Robert W. Johnson, III, MD, Bernard Kapiloff, MD, Edward J. Kitlowski, Jr., MD, Stanley A. Klatsky, MD, Octavius P. Large, MD, Lawrence D. Pinkner, MD, Jerome S. Plasse, MD, Mario Vahos, MD, and Hans R. Wilhelmsen, MD. Edward A. Kitlowski, MD, was made a member of the society.

John Staige Davis, MD, probably was the first physician in this country to devote his entire practice to plastic surgery. He published the first American text on plastic surgery in 1919, a book profusely illustrated by photographs of his own cases and drawings made by his wife, Kathleen Gordon Bowdoin.

"Staige Davis", as he was called, was born in Norfolk, Virginia, January 15, 1872, the son of an Army surgeon. Much of his youth was spent traveling. There was no school available when his parents moved to the Dakota territories near an Indian agency and his parents were his only teachers. He later went to Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia, and Saint Paul's School in Garden City, Long Island. He attended and graduated from the Yale University in 1895 and The Johns Hopkins Medical School in the class of 1899. After 1899, he remained in Baltimore to practice surgery. He expressed the desire to write a book on plastic surgery while working under Dr. Halsted; however, Dr. Halsted was not interested. Staige Davis began publishing papers on reconstructive surgery as early as 1907. His book, *Plastic Surgery*, was published in 1919, and copies were given to each of the Hopkins "Big Four", Doctors Halsted, Welch, Kelly, and Osler. He never received a word from Dr.

Halsted acknowledging the book. He continued to produce numerous papers on skin grafting and the use of the z-plasty until his death on December 23, 1946, at the age of 74.

Thus, he was somewhat of a prophet in this country in that his own medical school, The Johns Hopkins Hospital, for many years offered no support commensurate with the unique place of Dr. Davis in this special field of surgery. As a result, the training of plastic surgeons at The Hopkins was delayed and undeveloped in comparison with that of other schools which early recognized the need for such training. John Staige Davis remained as Associate Professor of Surgery at Hopkins until his death in 1946.

He was a member of numerous medical societies. He was one of the founders and the first Chairman of the American Board of Plastic Surgery, which was founded in 1937. He was also a founder-member of the American College of Surgeons and was elected to the Board of Regents just before his death. He had served during the First World War as a captain in the medical corps of the United States Army and was a member of the committee appointed by the Surgeon General to organize plastic surgery units for the Army Medical Corps.

A personal glimpse into the character of the man and his ability might be gained from an excerpt of an article in *The Sunpapers* written at his death by the mother of one of his patients: "He was a gifted man, a brilliant organizer, with capable surgeon's hands, a marvelous vision, and a humane soul; of all these gifts he gave freely to soldiers of two wars and to civilians of every age, race, religion, and creed. Such a man as Dr. John Staige Davis deserves a monument—not one of hard stone—but rather something of a tender nature in keeping with his personality.

Plastic surgery owes a great debt of gratitude to Dr. John Staige Davis; the influence of his life and ideas is still felt. We are proud to dedicate our new society to this great surgeon.

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