Eric Oldberg, M.D., 1901–1986

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Dr. Eric Oldberg died on June 18, 1986, at the age of 85 years. He was born in Evanston, Illinois, on November 7, 1901, the son of Arne Oldberg, Professor of Music at Northwestern University, and Mary Sloan Oldberg. He attended Northwestern University, where he received a B.Sc. degree in 1923, an M.D. degree in 1927, and a Ph.D. degree in 1928. In 1961 he was awarded an honorary doctorate of laws from his old university. He received his neurosurgical training at Peter Bent Brigham Memorial Hospital and was the last person to serve alone as Chief Resident under Dr. Harvey Cushing, in 1929 and 1930.

From 1931 to 1936, Dr. Oldberg held the positions of Assistant Professor and Associate Professor of Surgery and Acting Head of the Department of Surgery at the University of Illinois. In 1936 he became Professor and the first head of the new Department of Neurology and Neurological Surgery, an appointment he held until 1971. As Program Director at the University of Illinois, Eric Oldberg trained many clinical neurosurgeons. As a co-founder of the Illinois Neuropsychiatric Institute, he hosted the examinations for the American Board of Neurological Surgery for many years. With Dr. Percival Bailey, Dr. Oldberg gathered together a prominent group of investigators, including Frederick Gibbs, Paul Bucy, Gerhart Von Bonin, Warren McCulloch, and others.

Dr. Oldberg was a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and served as President of the Harvey Cushing Society (now the American Association of Neurological Surgeons) in 1942. He was President of the Institute of Medicine of Chicago in 1957, and was an Associate Editor of the Journal of Neuropathology.

Throughout his life, Dr. Oldberg maintained broad interests and was active in civic affairs, serving on the Board of Directors of the Chicago Lyric Opera and the Chicago Symphony Association, of which he was President from 1952 to 1963. In 1961 he was appointed President of the Board of Health of the City of Chicago. The Coleman Medal of the Institute of Medicine was awarded to him in 1966 for contributions to civic affairs. Dr. Oldberg is survived by Mrs. Mary Swissler Oldberg.

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