Dr. Leo M. Davidoff
President of AANS, 1956–1957
Dr. Leo M. Davidoff died quietly in his sleep on December 24, 1975, while visiting his daughter and grandchildren in England after a long struggle with parkinsonism. His physical prowess was diminished, but his mind remained sharp and inquisitive to the end. For Dr. Davidoff, the patient was the focus of every resource the art and science of medicine could command to assuage pain and heal. He agonized over his incapacity to control runaway disease and to understand the meaning of suffering. That in his final years Dr. Davidoff himself suffered from a progressive neurological impairment was an irony probably not lost upon this preeminent teacher and healer. Even now as I put my thoughts together for our Journal of Neurosurgery which he loved so dearly, Leo's picture faces me across my desk with that characteristic, piercing, but kind mixture of strength and gentleness that blended together so completely and best characterized his greatness.

Dr. Davidoff was born in a little town in Latvia in 1898, the son of a shoemaker and the seventh of nine children. Dissatisfied with the quality of the security and education he could obtain for his children, Dr. Davidoff's father, after several abortive attempts in Sweden and Germany, moved to the United States with the older children to be joined shortly by his wife and younger children, among them Leo. The struggle was not over, unfortunately, as fire destroyed the entire town of Chelsea, Massachusetts, including the Davidoff's home. The closely knit family did not lose their courage and optimism, which were based on a deeply felt religious philosophy. Young Leo worked daily after school hours in a factory whose manager, recognizing Leo's intelligence and urge for knowledge, supported his college education.

After 2 years of premedical education at Harvard University, Dr. Davidoff was admitted to the Harvard School of Medicine, where he graduated in 1922 AOA. After his internship, Dr. Davidoff served as surgeon to the Byrd-McMillan Arctic Expedition in 1925. On his return from this famous adventure he was asked by a charming young lady to speak of his experiences at a literary circle. Ida Fisher, now a member of the faculty at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Leo were married in 1926 after completion of his neurosurgical residency with Dr. Harvey Cushing at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital.

After Dr. Davidoff's formal surgical training and neurosurgical training at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital he was awarded a Peter Bent Brigham Traveling Fellowship. He served for 6 months at the National Hospital, Queen Square, London, on the neurological service of Dr. Gordon Holmes and 6

"The potter and the clay are made of the same material"