

Alexander Brunschwig

September 11, 1901 — August 7, 1969

Doctor Alexander Brunschwig was born in El Paso, Texas, on September 11, 1901. After attaining his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees at the University of Chicago, he entered Rush Medical College where his superb intellect and gigantic capacity for work resulted in his immediate recognition as an outstanding student. During his student days at Rush, he helped Maximow and Bloom write their well-known histology text. He often reminisced about having spent some of the happiest and most fulfilling days of his life at medical school.

He learned every facet of his chosen profession. Sharing his knowledge with the doctors of the world, he taught, lectured, operated and, in the end, established a new chapter in American surgery.

He contributed more than four hundred articles to American and foreign journals. He was the author of four textbooks and he contributed chapters to two score more. His monumental work on *The Surgery of Pancreatic Tumors*, published in 1942, was inspired by the untimely death from pancreatic cancer of his own much admired father.

He was the first to do a one-stage radical pancreatoduodenectomy and the operation for which he is world renowned, the Brunschwig pelvic exenteration, is part of the armamentarium of almost every surgical service in the world.

Medical history will best judge Doctor Brunschwig's contributions when time has allowed their significance to be evaluated and it will judge him well for the stimulation he provided, for the controversy that he stirred, and the contributions that he made. Indirectly by challenges, he stimulated the radiation therapists to reevaluate their own work and to improve their techniques; the physiologists were presented with a whole new set of problems to solve that required a dedicated effort on their part. In essence, Doctor Brunschwig got gynecology moving again in the therapy of cancer.

He became a leader in medicine at a very young age. His chiefship was not the crown to be worn in the twilight of life but rather it was the legacy of a man whose future was longer than his past. He was Memorial Hospital's glory in a special way, for he somehow managed to personify what is magnificent in the hospital, and what is most appealing, with courage, doggedness, loyalty and strength. He made everyone proud of the hospital and proud of themselves.

His family and home life always occupied the dearest spot in his heart. It grieved him that the immense responsibilities of his position made demands on his time that deprived him of precious moments that he would like to have spent with his family. He often spoke with affection of his children, Louise Suzanne and Roxanne Josephine, known to her family as Josette. Their marriages, happiness and successes pleased him and he looked upon his two sons-in-law, Paul and Bruno, as the sons he never had. His heart leapt up when he saw his grandchildren, Louise, Nicholi and Mark, careening through life as if there was no tomorrow and his joy lit up the hearts of all the family during these never-to-be-forgotten moments. During these times he was not the world's greatest surgeon but rather the world's proudest grandfather. After Louise Suzanne and Josette left home to start their families, Doctor Brunschwig and his wife, Leah, for whom he had an abiding love, were drawn more closely together. Warmly and deeply he loved his wife Leah who served him so well. One could not see him for a minute with his wife and children and not realize the bond of friendship, understanding and love that existed among them.

Doctor Brunschwig had a deep religious sense. He was a mystic and mystics have faith above reason. He shared this gift with his family and guided them to an understanding and respect of religion.

With it all, he had time to be a student of the arts, literature, music, sculpture and the humanities. He was one of the most cultured and scholarly men of our times. Each generation has its stars that shine in every field of human endeavor and, in medicine, we the students of Doctor Brunschwig believe he was one of our blazing stars of this era. The medical profession and his fellowman, for whom he had such compassion, are better for his having shared part of his life with us.

For such a long time during the glory years of Memorial Hospital, Doctor Brunschwig was so much a part of the hospital that he became known as Mister Memorial and like a beautiful song in the end Memorial Hospital was part of him.

His friends, colleagues and fellowmen regret and mourn his death on August 7, 1969.

Hugh R. K. Barber, M.D.