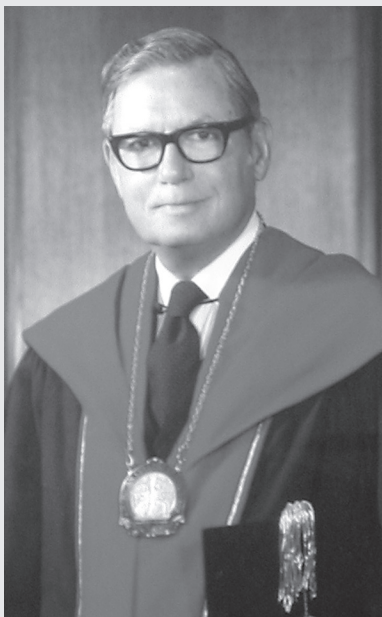

In memoriam

William Polk Longmire, Jr., MD, FACS, 1913-2003, remembered

by C. Rollins Hanlon, MD, FACS, ACS Executive Consultant

Fifty-seven years ago, W.P. Longmire, Jr., became a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) following the example of his father, a surgical practitioner in the small Oklahoma town of Sapulpa. Fifty years later, one of his daughters, Sarah Jane Longmire-Cook, also entered the Fellowship to which her father had made such magnificent contributions. An appreciative account of three generations of Longmire surgeons in the ACS was written by Bill's longtime colleague, Sherman M. Mellinkoff, MD, FACS, the distinguished gastroenterologist and dean of the medical school at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA).¹

In March 1998, the *Bulletin* featured on its cover a series of pictures highlighting an historical article by Dr. Longmire covering the "middle period" of College history from 1937 to 1973.² As a third-year medical student at Johns Hopkins in 1937, he had attended his first Clinical Congress in Chicago, IL, where his father was inducted as a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. Thirty-six years later, Bill completed his formal service to the College after a year as President, following three terms as a member of the Board of Re-



Dr. Longmire

gents (1962-1971) with a final two years as Chairman of that Board.

The 1998 *Bulletin* article in its text and pictures provides an invaluable view of the College during the middle third of its 90-year history. Notable among the farseeing Longmire contributions was his initiation of a special relationship with surgeons under 45 years of age, stipulating that "their

counsel should be sought" and that they should be represented significantly at all levels of College administration. This groundbreaking notion has vivified College activities over more than three decades since he perceptively established this large cadre of "young surgeons" as active participants in ACS decision making.

The Surgical Research Committee of the College takes its origin from his chairmanship of the Conjoint Council on Surgical Research, which focused the investigative efforts of a number of surgical organizations. His work in reorganizing the structure and function of multiple College committees resulted in guidelines known familiarly as "the Longmire Rules." And to those Fellows who were privileged to work as Regents under his deft, decisive management of that important Board, he will be remembered as one who brought to administration the same superb skills that marked his many achievements in operative surgery.

In addition to his great technical skills in the operating room, Dr. Longmire conceptualized and brought to wide use a number of eponymic surgical procedures.³ These were opera-

tions that evolved and improved as he instructed his resident surgeons and senior surgical colleagues worldwide, especially in Germany and Japan. Mellinkoff has warmly recorded many details of his pedagogic legacy based on several decades of close association at UCLA.

Space limitations preclude a listing of his many contributions in research, clinical surgery, and administration, except to note his role as one of five founders of the medical school at UCLA. He was a vital contributor to the International Federation of Surgical Colleges, held high office in many major surgical societies, and received Honorary Fellowship in the Royal Colleges of Edinburgh, England, and Ireland. During a military tour of duty, he established a distinguished record with academic colleagues in the German surgical profession and was the first honorary foreign member of the Japanese Surgical Society in 1985.

Bill died quietly on May 9, 2003, after a two-decade struggle with a carcinoid tumor, burdened as well by the dementing illness of his lovely consort, Jane. His graceful equanimity was inspiring, marked by

continuing significant achievement in spite of these sore trials.

It is difficult to express adequately the value of our friendship and collegial relationship that began as freshmen in medical school, continued during a summer of work in pathology before our sophomore year, and was cemented by a post-intern year of joint research in the venerable Hunterian laboratory at Johns Hopkins. In 1946, after my naval service, his recommendation to Alfred Blalock, MD, FACS, played a significant part in my securing a position on the Hopkins surgical faculty, and his suggestion to an ACS search committee that I might serve as Director of the College led to my assuming that post in 1969 during his Chairmanship of the Board of Regents and beyond. These specific instances of personal indebtedness serve to indicate both his generosity of spirit and his concern for the progress of such organizations as the American College of Surgeons, Johns Hopkins, and UCLA to which he made such immense contributions.

Rather than risk a sentimentally biased evaluation of his stature and achievements, I re-

fer the reader to Mellinkoff's book and to Longmire's biography of Alfred Blalock.⁴ In this latter, personal account, drawn from Longmire's diary entries over 23 years of close, affectionate relation with Blalock as "the Professor," one can grasp the persona of the diarist himself. Biographers reveal important clues to their own characteristics, and the Blalock biography is a splendid testament not only to Bill Longmire's mentor, but to the unassuming, noble surgeon whose star shone in the surgical firmament as a brilliant blessing to patients and colleagues alike.

References

1. Mellinkoff SM: *A Life Is Short, the Art Is Long: Three Longmire Generations*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Publications Services Department, 1991.
2. Longmire WP Jr: The "middle period": The ACS from 1937 to 1973. *Bull Am Coll Surg*, 83(3):11-21, 1998.
3. Traverso LW: The Longmire I, II, and III Operations. *Am J Surg*, 185(5):399-406, May 2003.
4. Longmire WP Jr: *Alfred Blalock, His Life and Times*. Privately published, 1991.