

Dr. J.L. Richardson

Edited by Dr. Jerry Sisler for the Tulsa County Medical Society History Project

J .L. (Jack) Richardson was born April 19, 1914 in Boston, Massachusetts. His father, worked for Getty Oil Company. He moved with his family to Tulsa, where Jack attended Central High School and graduated from Holy Family. He attended University of Oklahoma pre-med graduating in 1935. He attended medical school at The Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1939 and received a medical degree from Tulane University School of Medicine in 1941. He interned at Charity Hospital in New Orleans. He served a three-year Orthopedic Residency at the University of Illinois Research Hospital in Chicago from 1941 till 1944.

**Military Service:** He served as a physician from 1944 until 1946 in the U.S. Navy during World War Two. He was stationed aboard the U.S.S. Pinckney, a hospital evacuation transport ship incorporating hospital wards and defended by anti-aircraft guns.

Saturday, April 28, 1945 was a warm day. They were near Karamu Rhett during the assault and occupation of Okinawa. Just before sundown the general alarm gongs called the crew to battle stations. The alert lasted for only a half-hour. A small group of men were allowed to watch the movie, "The Northwest Rangers." In the No. 5 hold of the ship, doctors were operating a casualty in the No. 1 operating room. At 17:30 the deck security patrolman on the forecastle fired his carbine at a low-flying plane, a "Kamikaze" or "Divine wind". It struck the ship in a massive explosion. The doctors resumed their surgery by flashlight. On deck, the superstructure was enveloped in a sheet of flame and ammunition began exploding. Sixteen patients and eighteen ships' officers and men lost their lives. It took three hours until the fire was finally brought under control. Dr. Richardson survived, though four other doctors lost their lives. The damage on the bridge deck included a jagged hole thirty feet in diameter, encircled by twisted steel.

**Medical Service after World War Two:** After the war ended, Dr. Richardson served for two years as general and orthopedic surgeon at Memorial Hospital in Williamson, West Virginia. He assisted in administering the first insulin treatment to be given at the Eastern Oklahoma Hospital in Vinita.

Dr. J.L. Richardson was best known for his work in his specialty, Orthopedic Surgery. His was a practice almost entirely related to trauma caused by automobiles and mechanical equipment. He also engaged in correcting curvature of the spine and insertion of artificial joints.

While serving as president of the Oklahoma State Medical Association he was a pioneer of assisting the public to make informed choices. He believed that government involvement drove up the cost of medical care and the burden of paperwork stifled private practitioners of medicine. He believed that the only thing that will stop government intrusion will be the inability of the government to support it. He was glad that medical developments have whipped diseases such as Polio.

Dr. J.L. Richardson started practice of orthopedic surgery at St. John starting in 1948. He served the hospital as Chief of Staff. Dr. Worth Gross said that Tulsa has been enriched for many years

by his practice of splendid orthopedic surgery.. Dr. Richardson took pride in his study and paper on the Utilization of Spinous Processes in Spinal Fusion.

In July 1950, he was named Chief of Staff for the Junior League's Hospital for Convalescent Children in Tulsa. In 1953, he became the first president of the Tulsa Surgical Society, an organization instrumental in upgrading hospital surgical services and educational processes. He commented that surgical entrance into the chest cavity surgically and artificial blood vessels dramatically changed his trade. He recalled some vain attempts trying to wrap aneurysms with the cellophane from Lucky Strike cigarette packs in an attempt to scar aneurysms and thus to keep them from exploding. He also remembered practicing when there were no antibiotics-a time when surgeons spent a good deal of time combating infection.

He was chosen President of the St. John Hospital Medical Staff in November, 1967. He was elected President of the Oklahoma State Medical Association in May, 1974.

Legacy: Dr. Richardson retired from orthopedic practice in 1979. Then he traveled annually to Hong Kong where he visited hospitals and clinics for a closer look at medical and surgical services in remote areas. He also became interested in the art media of Jade and became aware that this was a unique time of buying opportunities. During these journeys his collection of Jade Art grew rapidly.

Dr. Richardson continued his interest in medicine and St. John Medical Center by helping establish the Saint John Medical Center Physician's Endowment Fund (AKA the Richardson Society). This was his way of repaying St. John for all that it did for him and his ultimate goal of improving patient care. Others praised Dr. Richardson saying that he was not afraid to speak his beliefs then do deeds to show them .An organization," The Richardson Society" was created in December 1989. The objective was to recognize those physicians who have continued the tradition of generosity and commitment established by Dr. Richardson and his first wife, the late Mary Richardson. Ultimately, Dr. Richardson's days were blessed by a deeply devoted relationship with Ms. Joni Richardson, whose selfless generosity and vision have been vital in establishing the Richardson Asian Art Museum. The Richardson Asian Art Museum is located at 4770 South Harvard Avenue, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74135. 918-747-9393. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday to Saturday. 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.