

DR. E. W. BERTNER

Dr. E. W. Bertner dreamed the dream for a great medical center in Houston. He laid his ideas before the trustees of the M. D. Anderson Foundation after the Texas Legislature in 1941 had appropriated \$500,000 for a cancer hospital to be operated by the University of Texas at a site to be selected by the University. The Anderson Foundation trustees recognized in this legislation an opportunity to gain for Houston the first unit of a medical center along the lines suggested by Dr. Bertner. The trustees offered \$500,000 to match the legislative grant as an inducement to locate the hospital in Houston. The offer was accepted and the first step thus was taken to create the Medical Center.

Dr. Bertner served as first director of the M. D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute and first president of the Texas Medical Center. He died on July 28, 1950, from cancer---two months after the Texas Legislature, in special session, had approved funds for construction of the cancer hospital in the Texas Medical Center.

A prominent gynecologist and surgeon, Dr. Bertner served as advisor to the M. D. Anderson Foundation trustees during the World War 11 years and thereafter when the foundations for the Texas Medical Center were laid. What has been wrought in the Texas Medical Center is a continuing memorial to a man who gave fully of himself in the service of others.

The August, 1950, issue of the Magazine HOUSTON and a resolution of the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors paid eloquent tribute to this remarkable man.

The magazine article:

DR. E. W. BERTNER

Death in the form of a foe he had combatted so long came to Dr. Ernst William Bertner on July 28, 1950.

Cancer ended the full 60 years of life for the president of the Texas Medical Center. Although his death had been expected, it still came as a shock to the thousands throughout Texas and the United States who had known Dr. Bertner as a friend and physician.

Dr. Bertner calmly diagnosed his own case as that of cancer two years ago, but did not relent from his fight against the disease. He eagerly insisted that every new development in cancer control be tested on him.

And even though seriously ill, Dr. Bertner continued to plan and be the guiding light of the \$100,000,000 Texas Medical Center, a project of which he had dreamed and worked with others even before World War I. It was not until November, 1945, almost 30 years later, that the Center was chartered. Dr. Bertner was asked to serve as its president. And the Center continued to be the main goal of his career.

Dr. Bertner was a Texan, born in the community of Colorado, Texas.

He was graduated with honors from the University of Texas School of Medicine at Galveston in 1911, going on to St. Vincent's Hospital in New York for his internship. Following internship he came to Houston in 1913 to practice, but only for a short time, for he enlisted in the British Army Medical Corps during World War I. He transferred to the American forces when the United States entered the conflict, receiving a shrapnel wound in front line fighting.

After post-graduate work at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore where he specialized in surgery, gynecology and urology, he returned to Houston. This was in May, 1922. That same year he married the former Miss Julia Williams.

And down through the years, Dr. Bertner coupled administrative ability with his high degree of professional qualifications. He served as acting director of the M. D. Anderson Hospital for Cancer Research in the Medical Center for four years, directing the building of its professional organization and its operation as a hospital. And for his service, he accepted no pay, just as the case as president of the Medical Center.

The list of organizations he had served sounds almost like a roster of the medical profession's associations. He had served as president of the Texas State Medical Association, Harris County Medical Society, Post-Graduate Medical Assembly of South Texas, the Texas Surgical Society and the Texas Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

A former vice president of the American Cancer Society, Dr. Bertner in 1949 received the society's award for distinguished service in cancer control. In June, Dr. Bertner was presented an honorary doctor of laws degree from Baylor and, about the same time, a resolution from the Ochsner Medical Foundation in New Orleans setting forth a section of its new hospital would be named the Bertner Pavilion.

Somehow, in the face of all his other duties, Dr. Bertner still found time for an active civic life. He was a director of the Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Citizen's Committee for Reorganization of the Executive Branch of the Government. He was a 32nd degree Mason, a Templar, Shriner, Knight Commander of the Court of Honor of the Scottish Rite and a member of the Houston Club and the Houston Country Club.

The resolution:

A heroic life ended in a heroic death at midday Friday, July 28, 1950, when Dr. Ernst William Bertner died of cancer. Much of Dr. Bertner's medical career had been devoted to fighting this dreaded disease; and when his own diagnosis discovered two years ago that he, himself, was victim of cancer, he dedicated his body as a living laboratory for experimentation with treatments offering some hope to mankind. Dr. E. W. Bertner died as he had lived--with complete purposefulness in the unselfish service of his fellowman.

Dr. Bertner served Houston in his professional practice during most of his life, becoming the trusted and beloved physician of many Houstonians. Drafted as acting director of the M. D. Anderson Hospital for Cancer Research, he would accept no pay for his service while pioneering the building of its professional organization. The wide range of positions of honor and service to which the medical profession had elevated Dr. Bertner in recognition of his demonstrated abilities shows how high he was held in the esteem of his fellowmen in medicine.

So full a professional life would seem to leave little opportunity for the exploration of other interests, but Dr. Bertner was in every respect an exceptional man. Among his many and varied civic activities was his service on the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, and other committees of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, where his stalwart capabilities, his diversified experience and his wide-ranging enthusiasms were unselfishly devoted without stint to the general welfare of his city, state, and nation. Dr. Bertner had further interests and constructive activities in other civic, fraternal, and social organizations and in his Church. In giving so generously of himself, Dr. Bertner also gave generously of material means to the welfare of his fellowmen, both personally and through the Bertner Foundation.

But the supreme triumph of Dr. Bertner's life is the realization of a dream which more than thirty years of dedicated effort is bringing to reality. Combining vision with patient but determined work, Dr. Bertner led in the

establishment of the Texas Medical Center, unusual in its conception and destined soon to become one of the great centers of medical research, education and treatment in the world. From the time of its founding until his death, Dr. Bertner served as the first president of the Texas Medical Center, directing the development of its basic plans and methods of operation, and devoting time and ability in attracting great institutions to the Center. The Texas Medical Center will long continue to grow in physical plant and influence as a monument to this great physician and surgeon whose memory will be forever enshrined in the hearts of his fellowmen to whom he devoted his lifetime of service.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Executive Committee of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, in regular meeting assembled this first day of August, 1950, that official recognition thus be taken of the distinguished public and professional service of Dr. Ernst William Bertner and that deepest sympathy be expressed to his bereaved wife; and furthermore that copies of this resolution be made a part of the permanent record of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, be sent to the wife of the deceased, and to the Texas Medical Center which is the splendid humanitarian realization of Dr. Bertner's fondest dream.

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Ralph Neuhaus, Secretary of the Board

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P. P. Butler, President