

FERDINAND PHINIZY CALHOUN, M.D.

BY *Alton V. Hallum, M.D.*



ON SUNDAY MORNING May 9, 1965, F. Phinzy Calhoun died at Emory University Hospital at the age of 85. Atlanta and Georgia and the Southeast lost a distinguished ophthalmologist and leading citizen, one who had contributed greatly in several areas of service to others. He will always be remembered for his pleasing manner, quiet dignity, his perfection in dress, and his cultured way of life. He was the personification of our idea of a true southern gentleman, and his fellow physicians often remarked that he acted and looked like a physician should act and look. His friends always enjoyed his companionship, his keen sense of humor, and his entertaining ability at appropriate story telling.

He was born in Atlanta on September 20, 1879, the son of Dr. Abner

Welborn Calhoun and Mary Louise Phinizy Calhoun, both members of pioneer Georgia families. Dr. Abner W. Calhoun was the pioneer ophthalmologist of this section of the country and was Chairman of the Section on Ophthalmology of the A.M.A. in 1882. The father of Dr. Abner W. Calhoun was a physician in Newnan, Georgia.

After attending the public schools of Atlanta, F. Phinizy Calhoun graduated from the University of Georgia in 1900. He attended Harvard for one year and then entered the School of Medicine of Emory University (at that time the Atlanta College of Physicians and Surgeons), graduating in 1904. He interned at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta and did his residency training in ophthalmology at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary and followed this with postgraduate study in Vienna. On his return to Atlanta, he was associated with his father in the practice of ophthalmology. On his father's death in 1910, he succeeded him as head of the Department of Ophthalmology at the Medical School and as chief of the ophthalmology service at Grady Hospital and Wesley Memorial Hospital (now Emory University Hospital).

In addition to his reputation throughout the South as one of its leading ophthalmologists, he was also well known for his contributions to education at both the University of Georgia and Emory University. He was a former president of the National Alumni Association of the University of Georgia. He served as chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Georgia Foundation. He established a lectureship at the University of Georgia in memory of his grandfather, Ferdinand Phinizy. He also established a lectureship at the annual meeting of the Medical Association of Georgia in memory of his father, Dr. Abner Welborn Calhoun. In 1937, he received the first Alumni Award from the Alumni Association of the University of Georgia.

In 1937, he retired as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology of the Emory University and was succeeded by the late Dr. Grady Clay. Dr. Calhoun's son, F. Phinizy Calhoun, Jr., has been Professor and Chairman since 1949. Dr. Calhoun, Sr., at the time of his death, had been a member of the Board of Trustees of Emory University for 34 years, and was a member of its Executive Committee. He was also a trustee of the Joseph Brown Whitehead Foundation. With older members of his family, he established and endowed the Medical Library in the School of Medicine of Emory University as a memorial to his father, Dr. Abner W. Calhoun. In 1954, Emory University granted him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. In 1960, an anonymous friend endowed and established the Ferdinand Phinizy Calhoun Chair of Ophthalmology in his honor at Emory.

He was the unusual combination of good physician, good business man. For many years he was a director and member of the local advisory board of the Citizens and Southern National Bank. He was deacon emeritus of the First Presbyterian Church. He was a member of the Piedmont Driving Club, the Capital City Club, the Chi Phi fraternity, the Phi Chi Medical fraternity, and the honorary societies Phi Beta Kappa, Alpha Omega Alpha, and Omicron Delta Kappa. His biography appears in *Who's Who*. During World War I, he served in the Army Medical Corps with the rank of major. He was a member of the local, state, and national medical societies. In 1917, he was Vice-Chairman of the Section on Ophthalmology of the A.M.A. He was a member of the American Board of Ophthalmology, 1924-33. In 1941, he was President of the American Ophthalmological Society, and also vice-president of the American College of Surgeons.

His thousands of former patients will remember him with grateful hearts. His former residents and students were inspired and enriched by his teaching, his meticulous and skilful surgical technic, his constant kindness, his immense care, and the human interest he took in every patient under his care. He was particularly adept at recognizing eye manifestations of systemic diseases. Among his fifty-five published articles in ophthalmological literature were original investigations on heterochromia iridis and angioid streaks. He also published a book on the Phinizy family and a history of the Atlanta Medical College. He was a conservative surgeon, who kept to the technics which his generation had found good. Genuine sincerity and modesty was so characteristic of him.

He is survived by his wife, the former Miss Marion Peel, whom he married in 1909; she too was a member of a prominent Georgia family. Other survivors are two sons, Dr. F. Phinizy Calhoun, Jr., Lawson Peel Calhoun (whose wife, Eleanor, is the daughter of the late Dr. Grady Clay), and a daughter, Mrs. Bickerton W. Cardwell, all of Atlanta, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Our feelings concerning this great man were expressed beautifully by Dr. Harry A. Fifield, Dr. Calhoun's minister, in his prayer at the funeral service. "We give Thee grateful thanks for this Thy gracious servant, and for his great and gracious influence which has come into our lives. We are grateful for the way in which he walked humbly with men, always in a ministry of healing following the example and spirit of the Great Physician, who went about healing the bodies and restoring the sight of men. We thank Thee for his gentleness and his gentlemanliness, for his love and compassion and understanding for his great multitude of friends."