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The Only Female Surgeon Present

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by Robyn Oro on March 16th, 2020

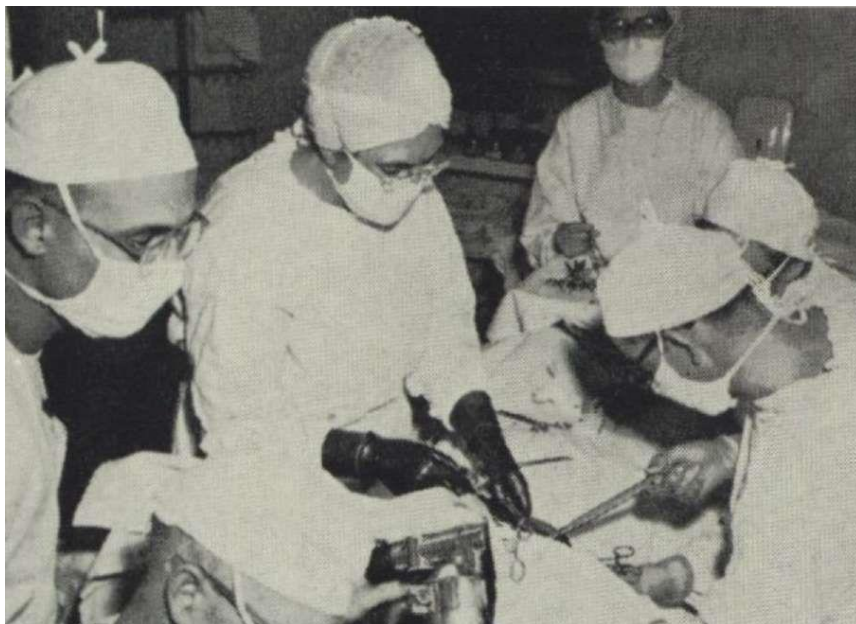


There is only one woman in this photo of the 1942 post-graduate class in major surgery at the Kansas City College of Osteopathy and Surgery (now known as Kansas City University). She was Margaret Jones, DO, instructor of surgery, and for many years the only female member attending the meetings and conventions of the American College of Osteopathic Surgeons.

When Dr. Jones graduated from KCCOS in 1922 there were no residencies in surgery in the osteopathic profession. She acquired her skills as the assistant to George Conley, DO (the man in the back row, center, in the white coat). The first woman to complete an osteopathic surgical residency was another KCCOS graduate, Betty Jo White, DO ('63).¹



Dr. Jones was also certified in OB/GYN surgery and helped organize the American College of Osteopathic Obstetricians and Gynecologists, serving as its first president in 1934. Here she is shown at the dedication ceremony of Conley Hospital, November 16, 1936. She is on the far right of the group of women in the foreground. Dr. Conley is standing at the front entrance with Mamie Johnston, DO (17, 18), the university's first graduate and longtime professor of Gynecology and Pediatrics, at his left. Dr. Conley would be leaving the ceremony shortly to operate on an inguinal hernia, and Dr. Jones would also leave to deliver the first baby at the new hospital, just as she did after the opening of Lakeside Hospital in 1924.²



In this photo, Dr. Jones, wearing the dark gloves, is the only woman on a surgical team that made national headlines in 1938. A young patient had come to Dr. Jones complaining of weight loss and abdominal pain of three years duration, ever since her appendix had been removed by a young doctor just out of medical school at a small rural hospital. Upon reading her x-rays, Dr. Jones diagnosed the problem: the surgeon had left a seven inch pair of forceps in the young woman's abdomen. The forceps had started to penetrate the woman's intestines and would have led to her death had they not been removed.³



Here is Dr. Jones at her retirement ceremony in 1955 receiving an honorary Doctor of Science degree from university President Joseph Peach with L. Raymond Hall, DO, looking on. She had performed surgery and taught at the university for 33 years, as well as operating a private practice with her husband, J. L. Jones, DO.⁴



Here are Dr. Johnston and Dr. Jones, both born in 1889, celebrating their 87th birthdays. Lifelong friends and colleagues, they would pass away within a year of each other, Dr. Jones in 1985, and Dr. Johnston in 1986.

Notes

1. Ballinger, Charles L., Executive Secretary, ACOS, Letter to Betty Jo White, DO, July 31, 1967.
2. Kaiser, A. A. "Our Hobby". *The College Journal*. 1936;20:306.
3. "The Forgotten Forceps is Removed". *The Kansas City Star*. June 13, 1938.
4. "Has Practiced and Taught 33 Years". *Co-operation*. 1955;30:12.