In Memoriam

Arthur S. Keats
1923–2007

The death of Arthur S. Keats, MD, on 28 August 2007, has left a void in the field of cardiovascular anesthesia. Dr. Keats, Chief of Cardiovascular Anesthesiology at the Texas Heart Institute, St. Luke’s Episcopal Hospital, and Texas Children’s Hospital from 1974 to 2005, made important contributions in the 1950s to anesthetic techniques related to the emerging field of temporary cardiopulmonary support for open heart surgery. He was especially involved in the development of cardiovascular anesthesia for neonates with congenital cardiac anomalies. His keen attention to patients and sound judgment in solving complex problems led to his early success in this field. Because of his accomplishments in both the clinical and research aspects of medicine, Dr. Keats gained legendary status in his profession.

Born on 31 May 1923, Arthur S. Keats was educated in his hometown of Brunswick, New Jersey. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Rutgers University in 1943 and a Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1946. After completing an internship at the University of Chicago Clinics, he began his residency in anesthesia at Massachusetts General Hospital. His department head, the renowned Dr. Henry K. Beecher, encouraged him to follow an academic career. In 1954, Dr. Keats qualified for certification by the American Board of Anesthesiology, which he served as president from 1975 to 1977. In the course of his career, he published at least 130 papers related to his specialty.

During his early career, Dr. Keats was employed at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, and at the Schwesternhaus vom Roten Kreuz in Zürich, Switzerland. In 1955, he was appointed Professor and Chairman of the Department of Anesthesiology at Baylor College of Medicine, where he served for 19 years. In 1974, he became Chief of the Department of Cardiovascular Anesthesiology at the Texas Heart Institute, St. Luke’s Episcopal Hospital, and Texas Children’s Hospital. Dr. Keats was also a Clinical Professor of Anesthesiology at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

Although he accumulated many honors and awards, Dr. Keats most valued his memberships in the Surgery Study Section of the National Institutes of Health and on the Anesthesia Committee of the National Research Council at the National Academy of Sciences. From 1970 to 1973, he was Editor-in-Chief of Anesthesiology, the journal of the American Society of Anesthesiologists. In 1970, he was also a member of the Food and Drug Administration’s Respiratory and Anesthetic Drugs Advisory Committee. During his illustrious academic career, he fulfilled dozens of named lectureships, both in the United States and abroad. He not only received the Texas Heart Institute Medal and the Ray C. Fish Award but also was named a Distinguished Physician of this institution.

My personal relationship with Arthur began in 1955, when he met an urgent need for expert anesthesia support for the rapidly expanding surgical program at the...
newly opened Texas Children’s Hospital. As the program expanded to include the affiliated St. Luke’s Episcopal Hospital, the Department of Anesthesia gained recognition and attracted residents and fellows. So far, more than 1,000 students have gained experience in cardiovascular anesthesiology in that department.

Arthur had many interests and hobbies. He enjoyed tennis in his younger years and was always an avid fisherman and bird hunter. He was a pleasant companion during these activities and on other social occasions.

Arthur is survived by his wife Marilyn, to whom he was married for more than 50 years, by their 4 children—Mitchell, Doug, Jeffrey, and Donna—and by their grandchildren. I extend my deep sympathies to Dr. Keats’s family, colleagues, and friends.

Denton A. Cooley, MD,
President and Surgeon-in-Chief,
Texas Heart Institute