

SALLY ABSTON, MD

Dr. Sally Abston was born on May 29, 1934 in the small town of Refugio, Texas. She announced when she was 4 that she was going to be a physician. Dr. Abston grew up in Fort Worth and Houston, where she graduated from Austin High School in 1952. She graduated from Rice University on a scholarship in 1956.

In 1962, Dr. Abston earned her medical degree from The University of Texas Medical Branch Galveston (UTMB), was the first woman surgical resident and joined the faculty upon completion. For 17 years, while teaching at UTMB and directing the Blocker Burn Unit there, Dr. Abston also treated children at Shriners Burns Hospital in Galveston and patients in the emergency trauma unit. She helped develop compression garments that improved the appearance of burn scars.



Dr. Abston was beloved by her colleagues, residents and patients alike. She gave her utmost to the betterment of her patients and was a staunch defender of her residents and students, insisting on collegial treatment for them in a time when there was less awareness of quality patient care and resident well-being. Her faculty colleagues knew her as a true and loyal friend who was always available when needed.

Among her many honors were the Ashbel Smith Distinguished Alumnus Award and the Dean of Medicine's Teacher of the Year Award.

Dr. Abston died at 74. Dr. Barbara Thompson, Chairwoman of Family Medicine at UTMB, who was Dr. Abston's family doctor said in her obituary "she was tough as nails and her language was very colorful. She was the kind of doctor who never gave up on patients. I remember when I was a student (at UTMB), how she worked at the hospital day and night."

Dr. Abston's office at UTMB was an open-door refuge for faculty and residents. She held "high court" there sitting in her rocking chair among her many violet plants and ceramic owls with a fresh pot of coffee and cookies for all. A great deal of learning and encouragement transpired in her office.

Dr. Abston received the 1994 AWS Distinguished Member Award. The current Dr. Sally Abston AWS Distinguished Member Award has been created by her colleagues and friends to honor Dr. Abston for the exemplary inspiration she gave to so many women and men throughout her career. The award will be given annually to an AWS member who, in addition to nationally recognized clinical expertise and providing outstanding mentorship, is a role model of "what I want my surgeon to be like."