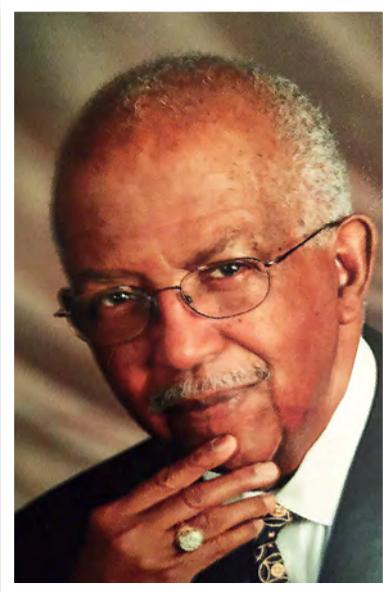




ALABAMA LEGEND IN OBGYN

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Rowell S. Ashford
M.D.

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Dr. Rowell S. Ashford is without a doubt a courageous pioneer who influenced the delivery of women's healthcare in the state of Alabama in a profound manner. During his 37-year private practice career in Birmingham, he provided obstetrical and gynecologic care to thousands of indigent women in Birmingham. Dr. Ashford served as General Medical Officer in the United States Airforce from 1963-1966 after his graduation from Meharry Medical College in 1962 and completion of his internship at Cook County Hospital. Following his military service, Dr. Ashford completed his residency at Maricopa County Hospital in Phoenix. Dr. Ashford almost did not leave his mark on Alabama - due to racial barriers that black physicians experienced in the 1970s. He originally planned to practice in California, but upon hearing about Cooper Green Mercy Hospital opening, he decided to start his practice in downtown Birmingham. Dr. Ashford helped establish the Jefferson Clinic which remained in operation at Cooper Green until 2013.

Dr. Ashford is best known for training hundreds of medical students, residents, and nurse practitioners at Cooper Green. "Dr. Ashford truly empowered the residents in all aspects of care and let them rise to the highest level of their capabilities," said Dr. Joseph R. Biggio, Jr., M.D., Division Director of Maternal-Fetal Medicine at UAB. "No matter how difficult the case, or how things might be going the wrong way, he was always able to keep his composure and get the case back on track. With his approach, he has probably taught more OBGYN physicians how to do difficult abdominal hysterectomies than any other physician," Dr. Biggio said.

"Scores of residents have benefitted from his extraordinary patience in the gynecology clinic and operating room while he mentored us in sound, evidence-based decision making and surgical technique," said William A. Andrews, M.D., Ph.D., Chairman of the UAB Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. "In turn, his trainees had the opportunity to pass along to younger physicians the skills taught to us by Dr. Ashford. Those he has mentored through the years hold enormous respect for him," said Dr. Andrews.

Born in 1936 in Birmingham, Dr. Ashford enjoyed growing up with a large, loving Christian family in a neighborhood of "good neighbors and friends," he said. His father and older siblings encouraged education which led him to become an outstanding student. Dr. Ashford's compassionate nature led to his being "always sensitive to persons with illnesses as well as animals. This seemed to have set me on the path to pursuing a medical career," he said.

Dr. Ashford's top memories of his career are performing very complicated surgeries; delivering a large number of babies a month; and the unforgettable relationships he developed with great nurses and physicians. When asked his greatest accomplishment, Dr. Ashford stated, "Being able to deliver many complicated births and performing a large number of highly complicated surgeries."

When asked about his residency, Dr. Ashford said a lot of work and long hours were involved, "but I appreciated the challenge. I truly enjoyed working with the staff and professors. Receiving my Medical Degree was the highest achievement of my life." he said. Dr. Ashford has some sage advice to young adults interested in becoming a physician-researcher the requirements of becoming a doctor; establish a relationship with a physician willing to mentor; and if an interest is still maintained, work hard and keep your eyes on the goal. "My mentor was William Crisp, M.D., Chairman of the Department of OBGYN at Maricopa General Hospital in Phoenix," Dr. Ashford said. "He noticed my interest in surgery while I was in the Air Force and invited me to train under him for my residency. He was an excellent gynecologic surgeon. Two of the major things he taught me were to 'recognize and know your limitations' and 'seek and consult when necessary.'"

Dr. Ashford said he most enjoyed achieving positive, life-enhancing outcomes for patients during his practice of medicine. When asked, Dr. Ashford stated the legacy he wants to leave behind is that "I played a role in influencing my son and nephew to pursue a career in Medicine. I am also proud that I was able to assist in training students at UAB in becoming practitioners." In addition to his induction to the 2014 Alabama Healthcare Hall of Fame, Dr. Ashford received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Birmingham Business Journal in 2007, and was chosen by UAB OBGYN residents to receive the Best Teacher Award for many years.

Dr. Ashford and his wife Rosemary are the proud parents of four children - a physician, a lawyer, an acupuncturist, and a social worker, all helping/healing professions, indicating that "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree." The Ashfords also enjoy eleven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. As a retired physician now residing in Nashville, there are many things Dr. Ashford continues to do for emotional and mental health. He states he does have frequent OBGYN consultations with his son and nephew. He also continues his daily devotional time, and Dr. Ashford and Rosemary are very involved in their local Baptist church. He also enjoys deep sea fishing, duplicate bridge, and extensive travel. Most of all, he said, "time with family and friends gives me a great sense of well-being...I can truly say that practicing medicine has been the most rewarding and fulfilling career for me. I would pursue the same career all over again."

"Dr. Ashford is truly a pioneer in a health system designed to provide excellent care to underfunded and unfunded patients insuring that they receive the best healthcare available to anyone. For decades, he has been devoted to providing exceptional leadership resulting in innovation that maximized the use of often limited resources," said Dr. Andrews. "He met all of these challenges unwaveringly and clearly established himself as an immense asset to women's health. I can think of no one more deserving of recognition as the 2017 Alabama Legend in Obstetrics and Gynecology," Dr. Andrews said.