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**OBITUARY**


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### Professor J. Donald M. Gass

Professor J. Donald M. Gass, a real giant in ophthalmology, passed away at the age of 76 years on February 26, 2005 in his home in Nashville, Tennessee, USA surrounded by his family.

His long activity places him among the great names in history of ophthalmology. Professor Donald Gass received both his undergraduate and medical degrees from Vanderbilt University, where he graduated with honours.

He served his residency in ophthalmology at the Wilmer Institute of the John Hopkins Hospital and completed a fellowship in ophthalmic pathology at the Armed Forces Institutes of Pathology.

He joined the faculty of the University of Miami School of Medicine in the Department of Ophthalmology in 1963, where he had a distinguished career combining clinical research and teaching.

He was Professor of Ophthalmology from 1972 until 1995 when he returned to his *alma mater*, Vanderbilt University, where he has continued his endeavours as Professor of Ophthalmology.

Donald began his career practicing general ophthalmology, and during this time became interested in the new technique of fluorescein angiography that for the first time permitted the detailed photographic study of physiological as well as anatomical changes in the retina and choroids. This new technique and his skills in ocular pathology led to his future clinical and research interests in degenerative inflammatory and neoplastic disease of the inner eye.

Don had a successful and intense professional life which has been highlighted by all the colleagues who have had the opportunity to share with him the clinical activity, the research projects and his didactic attitude. We all learned, directly or indirectly, much of what we know about macular disease from him.

He has been cited for outstanding achievements by almost all of the major professional organizations in ophthalmology and by many academic institutions in the United States and abroad.

In addition to the "influential ophthalmologist" honour, Donald Gass received numerous international awards throughout his career, including the 1987 establishment of the Gass Medal in his honour by the Macular Society, given for outstanding contribution in macular disease. Dr. Gass was much in demand as a visiting professor and guest speaker, having given innumerable named lectures and scientific presentation.

When in 1990 I founded the *European Journal of Ophthalmology* I asked Don for help and his immediate answer was a paper on rare cases of Exudative Stellate Neuroretinopathy and Coats' Syndrome which was published giving great fame to our journal. I cannot express strongly enough my personal thanks for his support.

We all are fortunate to have had this unique individual as our leader. He has taught each and every one of us important information, and he has enhanced the care of innumerable patients. Another of Don's pre-eminent characteristics was his remarkable humility and his absolute integrity.

Donald Gass is survived by his wife, Margy Ann, and children, John Donald Gass of Danville, Carlton Simpson Gass, M.D., of Miami, Dean Simpson Gass of Charlotte, N.C., and Media Lee Yawn, of Nashville.

Although we mourn his passing, we can celebrate the life of a man who, through his warmth and his scientific efforts, brought so much good to his friends and patients. I and so many others who knew him loved him and miss him already.