Alan C. Woods, Sr.

Alan C. Woods Sr. was born in Baltimore on August 20, 1889 to a very prominent Baltimore family. His father Hiram Woods Jr. was a Princeton University graduate who while a student at Princeton, roomed with future President of the United States Woodrow Wilson. His father became ophthalmologist of his day. From 1887 to 1894, Hiram Woods, Jr. was Professor of Ophthalmology at the Woman’s Medical College of Baltimore, and from 1895 to 1900, he was lecturer and later Head of the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Maryland.

Alan Woods entered Boys’ Latin in September of 1902 as a freshman. He was a good student and excelled in math always finishing first or second in his class. At Boys’ Latin he played on the fencing team and was a member of the 1905 Boys’ Latin football team that eventually lost to City College for the interscholastic championship in the fall of 1905. At BL’s graduation ceremony in June of 1906 he was selected honorable mention for Best Boy. In the fall of 1906 he went to study at Johns Hopkins University for his undergraduate work. After graduating from Johns Hopkins as an under graduate he decided to enroll in the Johns Hopkins Medical School. In 1916 Alan was a First Lieutenant in the United States Army Medical Corps in the Punitive Expedition in Mexico and later from 1917-1919 during World War I he served a Major seeing service in Europe. Like his dad before him, Alan decided in medical school to focus on the human eye and he became an ophthalmologist. He spent nearly his entire career at Johns Hopkins except for two residencies – one in Boston and one at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He excelled in ophthalmology, patient care and was an “ideal doctor.” His most endearing trait was his love of life, he loved to be around his family, friends and colleagues and especially the ophthalmologists he trained. Dr. Alan Woods was the Ophthalmologist-in-chief at JHU Medical School and went to work at the Wilmer Ophthalmological Institute at Johns Hopkins in 1925. He remained a doctor at the Wilmer Eye Clinic the rest of his professional life.

He classified uveitis into the granulomatous and nongranulomatous types which is now widely accepted as a general classification. He suggested the possibility of streptococcal allergen as the cause of uveitis. He published an article in 1950, on the diagnostic and therapeutic use of Streptococcus vaccines in nongranulomatous uveitis which was presented at the 16th International Congress of Ophthalmology. He also worked on ocular symptoms of chronic polycythemia rubra vera. In 1954 he was the recipient of the prestigious medical Howe Research Medal. He was President of the American Ophthalmological Society in 1956 and wrote numerous papers on studies he conducted. In 1957 he was awarded the Johns Hopkins Distinguished Service Medal. In 1958, the year he received the Gonin Medal in recognition of his most important contribution to science, with the recognition and clarification of the Ocular Histoplasmosis Syndrome. The title of his publication was “The probable role of benign Histoplasmosis in the etiology of granulomatous uveitis.”

Dr. Woods was considered an international superstar in his field.

On Friday, February 15, 1963, after a comparatively brief illness Dr. Alan Woods succumbed to a heart attack. He was 73 year old.

In 1964 the Alan C. Woods Research Building, part of the Wilmer Ophthalmological Institute at Johns Hopkins University, opened its doors.