

DR. WILLIAM GERSHOM DOWNS, JR.

G. B. PENNEBAKER

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Cookeville, Tennessee*



Dr. William Gershom Downs, Jr., late treasurer of the Tennessee Academy of Science, died of a heart attack January 6, 1964, in Cookeville, Tennessee. Dr. Downs was born in Evansville, Indiana, 1897. He attended public schools in that state. In 1915 he enrolled in Vanderbilt University but joined the Army in 1917 before completing his degree. He served in the Army until 1919 and then re-entered Vanderbilt University where he received the D.D.S. degree in 1922. In 1926 he received the A.B. degree from Evansville College. In 1927 he was granted the M.A. degree by Indiana University and in 1930 was awarded the Ph.D. degree by the University of Pennsylvania. The following year he studied bio-statistics at Yale University as a post-graduate student.

Dr. Downs had a long and successful career in education and research, industry, and the armed services. He served as instructor of anatomy at the University of Michigan in 1927. From 1928-30 he was a senior instructor at the University of Pennsylvania. From 1930-34 he served as associate professor of pathology at the Chicago School of Medicine; in 1934 he was promoted to full professor and director of the department of pathology, bacteriology, and public health.

From 1935-40 and 1950-57 he was research consultant in industry; from 1940-41 he was director of disaster relief for the American National Red Cross.

From 1942-50 he served as Commanding Officer of the SHAEF Psychological Warfare School in Europe and Chief of Social Services in Germany. After his release from active duty, he served as an officer in the reserve corps, retiring in 1957 as Colonel of the Army.

In 1957 he joined the Tennessee Polytechnic Institute as an assistant professor in biology, later being promoted to associate professor. While he was associated with the Tennessee Polytechnic Institute, he directed the research of many graduate students and published a number of articles on his own research in experimental physiology and endocrinology in some of the better professional journals in his field.

Dr. Downs was a Fellow of the AAAS, and a member of the American Society of Zoologists, American Genetic Association, National Society for Medical Research, and a number of other scientific organizations. For many years he was active in the Tennessee Academy of Science having served as chairman of the zoology division, chairman of the membership committee, and as a member of the executive committee. He will be missed by his many friends and members of his profession.

Dr. Downs is survived by his widow, Mary E. Hahn Downs, and by two sons and one daughter, and several grandchildren.