Celebrating the Life of C. Bassett Brown, DDS, MSD

December 22, 1923 to February 6, 2012

Dr. Brown was born in Benton Harbor, Michigan in 1923. In 1940 he graduated from St. John High School, where he participated in baseball, football and track. He worked in a factory for one year to build funds for college, and entered the pre-dental program at Western Michigan University (WMU) in September 1942. In June 1943 he was drafted into the Army. He became a medic and was assigned to the 92\textsuperscript{nd} Infantry Division, the first Black Infantry Division, serving in Italy during World War II until his discharge in December 1945. During the war he was decorated with the Bronze Star and Oak Leaf Cluster for bravery and meritorious service in combat. He re-entered WMU in January 1946 and returned to the basketball court, becoming the first African American to play varsity basketball for WMU. In his senior year he was elected president of Gamma Beta Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity.

In 1948 he graduated from WMU with a BS degree and enrolled in the Graduate School of Chemistry and Physics, Fisk University, Nashville, TN. In 1949 he was admitted to Meharry Medical College, School of Dentistry and graduated in 1953. While at Meharry Medical College, he became president of his class and president of the student body, which comprised schools of Dentistry, Pharmacy, Medicine and the Graduate School.

Following graduation he served as intern in Oral Surgery at New York Metropolitan Hospital (NYMH), where he gained experience in general anesthesia. This allowed him to cover night calls on the anesthesia service of a local trauma hospital, providing him with sufficient funds to pay for graduate education in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at Northwestern University, leading to an MSD degree after two years. On matriculation he was accepted to the residency program in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at Cook County Hospital, Chicago, which had 3500 beds and considered the largest charity hospital in the United States. His acceptance was ordained by Orion Studvil, a dually trained Oral and Maxillofacial/Head and Neck Surgeon, who chaired both the Northwestern University and Cook County Hospital programs. Basset was the first Black intern at NYMH and one of the first two Black residents in the Department of Surgery at CCH: the other was Dr. Louis Moxy, dually trained and resident in general surgery.

During his training he covered night calls in anesthesia at Provident Hospital, Chicago. On completion of training, he was appointed Chief of Anesthesia and Senior Attending in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at Provident Hospital and served for one year. In 1958 he returned to his hometown, Benton Harbor, where he set up a practice in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and remained in the practice until his retirement in 1991. In 1960, he successfully completed the examination and became a Diplomat of the American Board of Oral Surgery, the fifth African American to achieve this status. In 1970 Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry designated him Distinguished Alumni of the Year. Twenty two years later Northwestern University followed with the same designation. He was a member of AAOMS, NSOMS, Valley Medical College Board and many more. He further distinguished himself by presenting
lectures nationally and internationally and contributed 35 publications, which appeared in JNDA, JAMA and the Dental Journals of the States of Indiana, Illinois and Michigan. His most treasured title was Visiting Professor at Meharry Medical College.

Throughout his life, Bassett continued to be an active member in his community, serving as a life member of the NAACP, chairman of the local section of the Federal Housing Commission, member of several educational, city, and governmental boards and advisory committees. He felt strongly about helping community youth and encouraging them to attend college. This is reflected in sponsorship of outreach programs in conjunction with Kappa Alpha Psi (KAP). In his honor the Benton Harbor chapter members of KAP dedicated and name their youth development building, The C. Bassett Brown Development Center, in appreciation of his tireless efforts on their behalf.