

Dr. Thomas A. Bruce (1930 – 2016) was born in Mountain Home, Arkansas, and is remembered as a physician and academic leader, and community philanthropist. He was preceded in death by his wife, Dolores Fay Bruce (nee Montgomery).



Graduating as valedictorian from the Mountain Home High School, Dr. Bruce entered premedical studies at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, then entered medical school in Little Rock where he graduated with honors in 1955. He interned at Duke University Hospital and took residency training in internal medicine at Bellevue Hospital and the Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, then at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas. He trained in cardiology at the University of Texas (Southwestern) and at the University of London Postgraduate Medical School before beginning as a member of the medical faculty at Wayne State University in Detroit.

In 1968 he moved to the University of Oklahoma as Professor of Medicine and head of the Cardiology Division. In 1974 he returned to his alma mater in Arkansas as Dean of the College of Medicine. During 11 years in that post he strengthened the medical curriculum by recruiting top professionals to serve on the UAMS faculty, and he bolstered its primary care training programs. With colleague Richard Norton he published a nationally acclaimed book, *Improving Rural Health*, which reported on the innovative UAMS training programs that grew out of their rural research studies.

In 1985 he joined the W. K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan, to lead a new national rural health program. One of his publications while there, *Community-Based Public Health*, drew attention to the need for strengthening the national public health workforce. Dr. Bruce remained at the Kellogg Foundation as Program Director for Health, Rural Development, and International Leadership until 1997 when he returned to Little Rock to care for his aging parents.

UAMS Chancellor Harry Ward in 2000 asked Dr. Bruce to chair a search committee to find a dean for a new public health school, to be funded with tobacco settlement funds. After some initial work in that regard, Dr. Ward and his successor, Chancellor I. Dodd Wilson, asked if he would resign from the committee and serve as startup dean, to avoid delays in construction. Lacking academic credentials in public health, Dr. Bruce agreed to serve only as Dean pro tem, then as Associate Dean when Senator David Pryor was brought on board as the founding dean, the graduate school's new Sturgis Hall facilities were completed, a faculty was hired, and the first students were admitted. Dr. Bruce remained as Associate Dean under Dean Skip Rutherford until his retirement in 2007.

An active volunteer in the community since then, Dr. Bruce served with Heifer International (as chair of its board of directors), the Watershed Community Service Agency, the Arkansas Department of Health, the Arkansas Community Foundation, Wildwood Park for the Arts, and a spectrum of programs within the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. He has received a number of honors and professional service awards during his career, and has made charitable contributions in support of community arts and youth services.