



Passing of A.T. Still, MD

—Andrew Taylor Still, August 6, 1828–December 12, 1917
Age 89 years, 4 months, 6 days

By December 1917, osteopathic medicine had seen a remarkable growth since the opening of the first school in 1892. Numerous other schools had been established, some had already passed (thankfully) into oblivion, numerous states had recognized the practice of osteopathy, the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) was a well-established institution, and research into the basis of osteopathic medicine was well under way.

During 1917, Dr Still suffered a series of light strokes that impaired his physical vitality. In early December, he suffered a major stroke that caused his death.¹ His death was commemorated in the January 1918 issue of the JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION, from which the following pages are reprinted.

A series of articles prefaced with an editorial by AOA President G.W. Riley, DO, highlighted various aspects of Still's personality. A.G. Hildreth, DO, delivered the funeral eulogy, clearly stating that "Daddy" Still had not feared death, but looked on it as a part of the natural law he had so carefully studied. In the article on Still's character by Ernest E. Tucker, DO, this theme is reiterated when Tucker quotes Still during a discussion on life and death as saying, "You trust life, trust death." Other of the passages detail Still's antislavery, profeminism stance, and his devotion to his students.

These vignettes portraying various aspects of Still's character and beliefs are instructive reading. They provide a valuable insight into the habits and character of the man who formulated the osteopathic medical profession and shaped it for its first 25 years. Although the writers were perhaps at times a bit overzealous in their pronouncements—as would be expected of such writings—it is apparent that Still exerted a tremendous influence on these early pioneers of the profession.

It is instructive to contemplate the reason for such devotion and loyalty. Was it the force of character, the strength of belief, the dedication to fairness, the sense of being pioneers? It is undoubtedly all these things, but what comes out most strongly in the ovals is the conviction that a radical and powerful idea had been formulated, an idea that reflected the natural law of health and disease.

As 1918 dawned, with world war and a flu pandemic sweeping the globe, Still now belonged to the ages and the profession was on its own, forced to move from infancy to adolescence.

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Reference

1. Still CE. *Frontier Doctor, Medical Pioneer*. Kirksville, Mo: The Thomas Jefferson University Press;1991: 251.