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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Casing Cunningham's Apparatus



A future pioneer of hyperbaric medicine from the University of Kansas, Anesthetist-in-Chief Orval J. Cunningham, M.D., was initially hailed by academics in 1908 for designing what he later called his "O. J. Cunningham Nitrous Oxide and Oxygen-Ether Sequence Apparatus." Unfortunately the Kansas City manufacturer that Cunningham chose to produce his namesake apparatus, George Key, used a metallic alloy that oxidized over the years, yielding a brittle device today whose legs and gas-cylinder yokes snap off under incredibly little duress. Perhaps this manufacturing flaw explains why this, the only example extant, has its one yoke cracked (*above, circled in red*) and its other one completely amputated. To curatorially hand-carry this fragile item aboard a jet, I fashioned a foam-padded case inside a suitcase as carry-on luggage. In spite of the Cunningham Apparatus' having hollow chambers, metal pipes, ominous looking dials, etc., airport security never stopped me to examine this suspicious carry-on . . . (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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