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Dr. Russell S. Fisher

Dr. Russell S. Fisher practiced forensic pathology for 35 years and became a pioneer in his field. He nevertheless found time to teach classes at Johns Hopkins University and University of Maryland medical schools. He also was a consultant to local hospitals, as well as the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda. As Maryland's chief medical examiner, he taught the world much of what it now knows about forensic medicine.

His workshop was the city morgue. It is not as legendary as the Saint James Infirmary or as glamorous as the lab used by television's Quincy. But under Dr. Fisher, the Baltimore city morgue became more than a place to examine violent and unexpected deaths. The findings made by Dr. Fisher and his staff have provided valuable knowledge into the mystery of death. Recently, he was recognized by the Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Foundation. He also assisted physicians in finding better treatment for emergency care at Maryland's Shock Trauma Center.

It is hard to separate a man from his ambitions, and Dr. Fisher was no exception. He trained early as a chemical engineer and later graduated from

medical school directly into the Navy. While serving in World War II, he treated many wounded servicemen and examined scores of corpses for identification. His fascination with pathology, and the contributions it provided for the living, led him to a career as medical examiner.

Whoever was responsible for hiring Dr. Fisher as Maryland's chief pathologist in 1949 did the world a favor. He helped establish the first public program for modern postmortems. It is no surprise that a large percentage of today's forensic pathologists trained under Dr. Fisher, and the places they practice draw extensively from the techniques developed at the city morgue.

Many of the postmortems performed by the Fisher staff have drawn much attention because of the baffling elements involved. Dr. Fisher's own work has led to arrests and convictions in some of Maryland's most celebrated homicides.

Every year the medical examiner's office investigates approximately 6,500 cases, nearly 20 percent of the all deaths in the state. This year the work will go on without Dr. Fisher, who died Monday at 67. He will be missed.