

**W. F. Bynum (ed.) and Helen Bynum (ed.), Dictionary Of Medical Biography [Five Volumes, cost \$749.95] (Greenwood Publishing Group, December 2006):1616 pages. Patton wrote the four pieces below:**

<http://www.greenwood.com/catalog/GR2877.aspx>

**Togba, Joseph Nagbe (b. Sasstown, Liberia, 18 December 1915;d.Silver Spring, Maryland, USU, 13 June 2002) Medicine, Medical Politics**

Joseph Nagbe Togba was born of Kru parents in Sasstown (Sinoe County), Liberia. From his early childhood Togba could be said to have been destined to become a physician:-his uncle was a prominent healer indigenous healer, was said to have prophesied that upon Togba's birth that this baby would also become a doctor like himself.

Togba received his primary education from American Methodist and Lutheran missionaries at the St. Paul Industrial School. He studied next at the College of West Africa (CWA) at Monrovia, and, at seventeen, in 1932, was introduced to the clinical practice of medicine and pharmacology at the Nana Kru Methodist Mission by Everett Veatch, an American physician from Texas. Togba graduated Valedictorian from CWA at twenty-one (1936). Since he was a 'tribal or country boy', as the Americo-Liberians called people from the interior, the Liberian government would not give him a scholarship to study in the US as they were only Americo-Liberians. Togba received help from Susan Mitchell, an American missionary who had mentored Togba throughout his schoolings. Gathering together their resources, Mitchell agreed to assist Togba financially for study and Veatch agreed to help Togba find a scholarship. Eventually in 1937, Togba boarded a ship for the USA with a scholarship from the Quaker Friends College at Wichita, Kansas.

When Togba arrived at Wichita he was the first African student to attend Friends College with the aim of becoming a doctor. He subsequently majored in pre-med concentrating upon biology and chemistry. Obviously an exceptional student from the outset, Togba appeared in Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges (1939) and graduated in 1940 (B.A.) Since blacks were not permitted to treat white patients, Togba enrolled in the 'Negro' Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tennessee, where he was able to gain broad clinical experience. Upon graduating M.D. from Meharry (1944), he began nine months of internship at Homer G. Phillips Hospital for 'Negroes' in St. Louis, Missouri.

In 1946, Togba returned to Liberia with an invitation to work for the government there. Monrovia was just as he had left it: no port, row boat taxis from the ships, unpaved streets, no electricity or pipe borne water. Togba found himself upon arrival as the only Liberian doctor among twelve others and the first assignment was at the Liberian Hospital at Snapper Hill which was in a desperately rudimentary state. Together with his American wife, Jessye Helen Trent (an obstetric nurse), he assisted in the establishment of the Nursing School, the Liberian Nurses Association, and the Liberian Board of Nurse Examiners with later membership in the International Council of Nurses and the West African College of Nurses. With further assistance from the United States Public Health Service, Togba went on to establish the National Public Health system in the late 1940s which remained in service until the Liberian Civil War (1989), and to become the Director of Public Health.

He was also important internationally as well as Nationally, however. More significantly, Togba headed the the Liberian delegation to the United Nations International Health Conference in New York City: this being the conference that ratified the founding of the World Health Organization (WHO). As well as being a founding member of the WHO, in 1954, Togba held the honor of being the first African to serve as President of its 7<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

Togba received another accolade: in 1949, he received the MPH from Harvard University, he served as Minister (Secretary) of Health of Liberia (1953-60), Executive Director of John F. Kennedy Medical Center of Monrovia (1968-72), Professor and Chairman of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at the Doglotti Medical School, the University of Liberia (1972-86). Unfortunately, Togba departed Liberia (1990-91) because of the Civil War which destroyed not only his personal papers but the Liberian National Archives as well.

Togba died in Maryland, USA in 2002.

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