By Samantha Hearn

Dr. Lloyd C. Elam was president of Meharry Medical College for 13 years, starting in 1968. He became an associate professor of psychiatry at the historically black medical school in 1961. Elam served as Meharry’s president from 1968 until 1981, then chancellor from 1981 to 1982, returning to teaching from 1981 until his retirement in 1995.

Under Elam’s leadership, Meharry built a new teaching hospital, which later became Nashville’s city hospital; a library; a science building; and more. Meharry also established a graduate school for public health, biochemistry and other disciplines while he was president.

In 2008, Meharry President Dr. Wayne Riley credited Elam as “the president who really built the modern-day Meharry.”

Elam was born in Little Rock, Ark., on Oct. 27, 1928. He earned his undergraduate degree from Chicago’s Roosevelt University in 1950. He served in the U.S. Army for a short time and in 1957 he became the first black student to receive a medical degree from the University of Washington School of Medicine.

Elam and his wife, Clara, had two daughters. He died in 2008.

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