John H. Houghton, MD (1907-1968), a general practitioner in Wisconsin Dells, was president of the State Medical Society of Wisconsin (now the Wisconsin Medical Society) in 1965-1966, and was a member of its Council and Commission on Medical Care Plans. He was also a member of the Council on Health of the State of Wisconsin.

Shortly before his death, he endowed an award for deserving medical students who exhibit not only scholastic and scientific excellence but also interest in working together in a medically organized sense to achieve broad goals of public health.

William J. Houghton, MD (1906-1969), a general surgeon in Milwaukee, was a member of the Council of the State Medical Society of Wisconsin from 1961-1969. Just prior to his death, he furthered the endowment established by his brother.

In establishing an award for medical students, the Houghton brothers hoped to encourage young men and women to a greater appreciation of the need for physicians to work together through their county, state and national medical organizations and to achieve a well-rounded education, including the socio-economic as well as the scientific.

The award is granted annually to one or more students who, through scholastic excellence, extracurricular achievement, and interest in the activities of medical organization, show high promise of becoming a “complete physician.”

Nominations for the award are made by the Deans of the medical schools in Wisconsin. The final selection is made by the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation, and presentation is made at the time of the Society’s Annual Meeting. The award consists of a plaque and a cash award.
Past Houghton Award Recipients

1968 James Renne, Robert Stanhope
1969 Bruce Buchanan, Daniel Kane
1970 Stephen Bernsten, Arthur Kaemmer
1971 Daniel Leicht, Winston Hollister
1972 Eliot Huxley, James Johnson
1973 Ted Bronson, Michael Krentz
1974 Jeffrey Davis, Richard Adams
1975 Kenneth Bussan, Stuart Schneller
1976 Dale Reid, Joshua Trabulus
1977 Diana Kruse, Daniel Wartinbee
1978 Richard Immler, Margaret Chen
1979 Ann Bartos Merkow, Douglas Jackson
1980 Laurie Neuman, Jose Luna
1981 Marc Williams, Doug Gentile
1982 Robert Homburg, Gabriella Coletti
1983 Joseph Kreutz, M. Patrice Eiff
1984 Jeffrey Lehman, Mary Jo Lanska and Douglas Lanska
1985 Thomas Stauss, Nell Davis
1986 Christopher Sartori, Mark Harlow
1987 Sue Ellen Hamkins, Diane Wolf
1988 John Keggi, Steven Hoer
1989 Mark Weiner, Lucy Runde
1990 Thomas Beaver, Christopher Evanich
1991 Jonathan Berkoff, D. John Bennett
1992 David Dries, Michelle Agnew
1993 Donald Anderson, Lisa Winters
1994 Kevin Wasco, George Rhodes
1995 Stephen Kolpak, John Schneider
1996 Stephanie Wojtowicz, Benjamin Tobin, Jr.
1997 Eric Jaeger, Maurice Peters, Jr.
1998 Tara Dall, Michael Bigelow
1999 Jessica Bartell, Charles Hu
2000 Joshua Modder, James Robinson, III
2001 Amy Jo Haavisto Kind and Michelle Seifert, Susan Tsai
2002 Sharad Rajpal, Amy Lukes
2003 Jean Larson, Steven Klein
2004 Kiran Prasad, Jennifer Knight
2005 Todd Eisenberg, Crystal Armstrong
2006 Kendra Hain, Amy Liepert
2007 Catherine Cahill, John Vasudevan
2008 Derrick Siebert, Kyle Swanson
2009 Nyama Sillah, Matthew Buelow
2010 Tina Dreger, Charles Czeczok
2011 Ben Durkee, Nicholas Kuehnel

William was born first, but John arrived in less than a year, so they were inseparable, practically twins. When Bill started school a year ahead of John, both boys were so distressed at the separation that their mother kept Bill back a year so they could attend together. They were highly competitive. John was ranked number 1 in state amateur tennis for several years, and Bill number 2. As a doubles team, they were unbeatable at the McKinley Marina courts. Bill and his future bride, Dorothy, were prom king and queen at Marquette University in 1929.

After Marquette Medical School, John took additional training in surgery at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Milwaukee and the University of Pennsylvania Postgraduate School of Medicine. He chose to set up practice in Wisconsin Dells, which was a sleepy small town with barely one fudge stand at the time. During World War II, John tried numerous times to enlist, even going as far away as Chicago, but since he was the only doctor in a town, he was declared essential to his community. He did serve as a Lt. Commander in the Navy Reserves for many years. After the war and as the town grew, John’s office expanded to 10 physicians and a large staff, and the Dells Clinic served the population of a wide area.

Bill loved to work with his hands and developed that ability in five years of surgical apprenticeship with Fred Stratton, MD. He continued to do a wide range of general surgery as well as general practice for 30 years. He also perfected his knack for sketching with charcoal. He was a Lt. Commander in the Navy Reserves for many years.

Both were what today would be called “family physicians” (Bill also did surgery and obstetrics), which meant they made house calls and took phone calls around the clock. They were devoted to busy families and read the Journal of the American Medical Association, too, so their days were long and busy. They were competitive with their colleagues—always striving for excellence in diagnosis and treatment—and not infrequently they were competitive with each other, too. One’s nose would be out of joint with the other over some trivial slight, and they wouldn’t speak with each other for months. But then they missed each other’s familiar grousing and reminiscing so much that they set up a round of golf and dinner at the country club and were back on good terms. John hit the sweet spot on drives. Bill was surgical on chips and putts.

In all these respects, they were each complete physicians, but each not quite complete without the other. It was no accident that they thought of establishing the Houghton Award for one or several medical students who show high promise of becoming “complete physicians” themselves.