

WHERE ARE THE GIANTS?

By

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As I began to think about preparing for today's presentation, my years as a medical student here were amazingly clear to me and one of the strongest memories was that we felt that we were surrounded by giants. Most of us had completed the traditional university pre-medical curriculum where individual teachers had not loomed so large and the university campus settings were far less forbidding. Here in the medical school all sorts of things were going on in what seemed like an enormous hospital setting and the men who were in charge were quite luminous for many reasons. Dr. Robert Bolinger who was two years ahead of me in medical school wrote, in his Reflections for the book about the Kansas School of Medicine edited by Stanley Friesen and Robert Hudson, that when he appeared for his entrance interviews he met four giants of medicine who would shape his life for years to come. The same giants were here when I came and when I graduated and they did have a profound influence on my life as well.

Slide 1. The Hospital and Medical School
(1942)

Probably the most formidable of the giants was Dr. Ralph Major in whose honor this lecture is given. I was interviewed by Dr. Major when I applied for admission to the medical school. (Slide 2). Very formal and austere in his starched white coat, he was far from encouraging to a very frightened young woman who had made up her mind that she wanted to be a doctor. He said that he was not sure that medicine was a good choice for women. Hopefully he later changed his mind. I still felt the same awe when I was assigned to his service for my medicine clerkship that, as I remember it, was a satisfactory but not a sterling experience.

One of the other things I did in preparing for today was to reread two older books that were on our bookshelves at home. One was an autographed copy of Dr. Major's own account of the University of Kansas School of Medicine, starting with the initiation of a premedical course on the Lawrence campus in 1880 and the establishment of a two year course in 1899 and continuing on until he retired in

1954. The second was The Wahl Years which was written by Helen Sims. It covered much of the same time period but was told in a less personal way. I also looked at the more recent book edited by Drs. Friesen and Hudson. After spending time with these books I realized that, even though we didn't recognize it at the time, Dr. Major was much more of a giant than he appeared to us and that he was instrumental in bringing many other important teachers to this school. Along with many other classes of medical students we learned Physical Diagnosis from Dr. Major's textbook which was first published in 1937. Rereading his personal story along with those of the other giants made me proud to say that I had been one on his students. His final question in his book on the history of the School of Medicine was to ask whether the present medical graduate (in 1954) was better than his ancestor of 1914, who had the advantage of a closer, more personalized, more "practical" instruction even if he did not work in such "palaces" and have at his beck and call so many chemical tests and mechanical gadgets. He also asked whether the present day

(1950's) graduate is less human, less resourceful, less reliant on his own intellectual powers or more of a mechanical robot who relies mainly on slide rules, nomographic charts, electrocardiograms and liver "profiles". The comparison with today's twenty-first century graduate would include many more technological additions. Dr. Major answered the question very diplomatically for a man who had devoted his life to the education of physicians by saying: "I am convinced that the vast majority of instructors are teaching more, teaching better and that the students know more than ever before". I hope that can be said of today's graduates and that we, as teachers, have been able to help them become more human and more resourceful as well as better prepared.

I was surprised to learn that Dr. Major was a native Missourian, having been born in Liberty. His undergraduate degree was from William Jewell College, a school that is still highly regarded for its pre-medical program. He studied in Europe before entering medical school at Johns Hopkins where he graduated in 1910. I'd like to know more about his

reasons for making this choice. Dr. Orr, another giant, whom we'll talk about later, was in the same class at Hopkins and Dr. Wahl, who later became Dean here, was only 2 years behind. At that time Johns Hopkins was considered to be the model of clinical instruction to which all schools aspired. It had the good fortune to have a well-equipped hospital along with the medical school and university. And amazingly enough KU had the same essentials, granted of course, on a much smaller scale. The Eleanor Taylor Memorial Hospital and the Medical School Class building were both located on "goat hill" high above Southwest Boulevard and most of the basic science faculty members were on the Lawrence campus. You'll recognize the names of many of these early faculty members by the buildings on the present Kansas City campus that have been named for them.

After two years as an assistant in Medicine at Hopkins, Dr. Major went back to Europe for graduate study and then returned to the United States to take a position as an instructor of pathology at Stanford. From there in 1914 he came to KU and "goat hill" to

become the head of the department of Pathology, but according to his description, he found when he got here that he was also the professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, assistant and technician for the department. I was interested to ascertain from a recent Newsletter of the Department of History and Philosophy of Medicine that at least three of the early women graduates of the school must have studied Pathology in the old building with Dr. Major serving in all of his teaching roles.

His description of the department is fascinating, including the disturbing accumulation of rubbish he found there. It seemed that the janitor who lived in the basement had such severe heart disease that he couldn't climb the stairs to the second floor where the department was located. However, after some aggressive clean up activities and reorganization of available materials, Dr. Major was ready to welcome his first class of 14 students in 1915 just ten years after the four year school had opened. When he found he would also have to teach Bacteriology he recruited Dr. Orr who had had the same class in

Bacteriology that he had when they were both second year students at Johns Hopkins.

I studied Pathology in the same building on “goat hill” described by Dr. Major only my professor was another giant, Dr. Harry Wahl, who had graduated two years after Dr. Major and Dr. Orr at Johns Hopkins. Dr. Major had worked under Dr. Wahl at the Yale army laboratory school while both were serving in World War I.

After the war Dr. Major spent two years at Henry Ford Hospital for more training in clinical medicine before returning to KU in 1921, this time as chairman of the Department of Medicine. He thus followed in the footsteps of William Osler, who also had spent his early years in Pathology at McGill University before coming to the United States to head two different famous medical schools. Dr. Major suggested that Dr. Wahl be his replacement in Pathology having been so favorably impressed with him when he had served under him in the army medical corps.

Dr. Major was responsible for bringing another giant to KU, Dr. Russell Haden with whom he had

worked in Detroit. Haden was a hematologist and researcher and became the head of the Department of Medicine's own Clinical Laboratory. This was another milestone for the medical school.

Dr. Haden later moved to Cleveland Clinic as chairman of the Department of Medicine. It was there many years later that I had the great privilege of being introduced to the wonders of Hematology by Dr. Haden. He had published the first recognized Hematology textbook in 1939 and he gave me an autographed copy of the third edition when it came out in 1946. Wintrobe's more famous Hematology text was not published until 1942. I shall never forget an impressive lesson Dr. Haden taught me when we were looking at microscopic slides together, taking turns since we didn't have multiple viewing scopes at that time. He asked me to name the cell he had put under the scope and I proceeded to call it a blast and to carefully describe all of the reasons that it could be so called. He stopped me to say: "That, my dear, is a blast because it looks like one and for no other reason."

I was inspired and taught by another giant in Hematology at Cleveland Clinic, Dr. Lemuel Diggs, an authority on sickle cell disease and a meticulous microscopist, as demonstrated in his beautiful atlas of the hematopoietic system. Many medical students learned how to recognize blood cells using that atlas which was published by Abbott and given free of charge to the students. I wrote my first medical paper with Dr. Diggs.

Later on I came to know personally other Hematology giants when I attended meetings where attendance was small and presenters were friendly and well known for their individual accomplishments. Kansas City Southwest Clinical Society brought many outstanding physicians to Kansas City and each was personally sponsored by a local physician. One year I was the local host for Dr. William Harrington who, in 1951, had reported the production of thrombocytopenia in himself by injecting into his own blood stream the plasma of one of his thrombocytopenic patients. Later I spent part of a summer at the University of Oregon and worked with Dr. Jim Linman, who was working on what was

to be the last single authored textbook of Hematology. While there I also worked with Dr. Arthur Seamen who did some of the pioneering work on tests for the newly described entity of disseminated intravascular clotting. Later I spent a semi sabbatical year working with Dr. Jack Hirsch at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, which, at that time, in medical jargon, was known as “The Thromboembolism Capital of the World”. Today it is rare to read any significant article about thrombosis without encountering the name of Dr. Hirsch and his colleagues from that center. These opportunities explain the fact that, while the title of the first edition of my textbook was The Laboratory Evaluation of Hemostasis, it became the Laboratory Evaluation of Hemostasis and Thrombosis by the third edition. So much for Hematology giants.

I want to return to the three early Hopkins graduates who found their academic homes in the new KU Medical School and moved upward and onward in their careers as educators here. It is easy for me to identify with their early endeavors since we had some similar pioneering experiences at the

UMKC School of Medicine when it opened in 1971. Dr. Major and Dr. Orr not only chaired departments but also wrote textbooks and Dr. Wahl taught us to appreciate the beauty and accuracy of the Pathology texts written by William Boyd. While continuing as Chairman of Pathology Dr. Wahl went on to become Dean of the Medical School and administrator of the hospital. Needless to say Pathology was considered the most important course in the medical curriculum. I was so convinced of its importance that I included a year of Pathology in my postgraduate training and recognize how important it has been in my career as a physician. A student stopped me in the hall the other day and said: "I hear that you give a really cool lecture on anemias." I told him the rumor was quite true and I could have added that my interest all started when I was educated by giants at KU where we really did actually count blood cells under a microscope and study stained slides of our own blood.

My class was the first to publish a yearbook and I want to share with you some of the photos and caricatures of the great teachers who made up the

teaching faculty in the years during which the medical school was moving forward to become the educational institution that is now is. It was the faculty that made it what is was, which of course is true of any learning environment. Facilities make it easier to care for patients and teach students but students learn primarily because they have role models that challenge and inspire them.

Almost all photos of Dr. Major show him in his starched white coat as I remember him from my first visit with him. It was an outward message of his professionalism.(Slide No. 3) It appears again in the caricature along with his austerity and commanding presence. With his arm around a statue of Hippocrates and the added camera and books we are reminded of his many interests outside the practice of medicine, especially the History of Medicine. He always appointed a class lexicographer to assure that all medical words were used properly and pronounced correctly. As I am in charge of a class in The History of Medicine at UMKC this summer I have been reading some of Dr. Major's two volumes on this subject and have been impressed with how

well written and informative they are. (Slide 4) Dr. Orr, who came to KU the year after Dr. Major did, started his career, as mentioned earlier, as an instructor in Bacteriology. In the ensuing three years he became an Assistant Professor of Surgery, Chief of the Dispensary and Pathologist to Bell Memorial Hospital. In 1924 he became Professor of Surgery. His textbook on surgery was, of course, used at KU but was also a standard text internationally. To students he seemed less a commanding surgeon than a good friend. (Slide 5) His expression in the caricature is mellow rather than haughty. Dr. Wahl said he had a remarkable capacity for human kindness.

(Slide 6) Not unexpectedly there was no caricature of Dean Wahl but a large informal photo showed him to be a small man who looked at the camera in an unassuming way. However there was never any doubt about who had the power and his knowledge and experience in Pathology were legendary.

I took Physical Diagnosis from Logan Clendening, the most famous “character” in the

faculty. He always appeared in formal attire (Slide 7) as in the photo and also in the caricature (Slide 8). There was, however, an important exception to this when he gave his famous demonstration of his swollen, red painful gouty toe. He also gave a much anticipated demonstration of gaits. He was “classy” and brought the school a lot of public attention both through his writing but also through his antics which were often publicized. Also he left us with the treasure of the Clendening library.

Another character who visited the school regularly was Arthur Hertzler, the well known “Horse and Buggy Doctor”. (Slides 9 and 10). Both slides represent him well. For us, though, he was a somewhat comical, scholarly surgeon and pathologist, who ruled his own hospital and clinic in Halstead, Kansas with an iron hand and liked to talk to medical students. We all received copies of his series of books on Surgical Pathology on graduation. His daughter was one of the early women medical students who were described in the Newsletter I mentioned earlier.

Peter T. Bohan, (Slide 11) for whom another annual lecture is named, frightened us regularly at the medical CPC's on Saturday mornings. We always prayed that someone else would be called on to make the mistake in answering his cryptic questions. He had graduated from medical school in 1900 and, with his great clinical experience and skill, he was as domineering as the caricature (Slide 12) suggests and "always right".

Dr. Edward Curran was a polished gentleman who loved to talk about the wonders of the eye. (Slide 13 and 14) The somewhat dreamy photograph and pleasant caricature match my memory of the man. He was the Father of Ophthalmology in Kansas City and it was considered a privilege to be taught by him personally in the Eye Clinic. Dean Wahl said that he kept the hospital in business because he brought all of his surgical patients here despite the hospital's lack of up to date facilities.

Leroy Calkins (Slide 15) came to KU several years after the early teachers, but there was no doubt about who ran the OG/GYN department when I was a student. His lectures were perfectly organized and I

kept my typed copies for years. They were better than a textbook. (Slide 16) Everyone recognized his “pride of pregnancy” stance and his all knowing countenance. He delivered my third child and fortunately the pregnancy and delivery followed the instructions I had so carefully recorded years before—stay on your feet as long as you can and, of course, no anesthesia. The quotation I remember is: “No woman who hears her baby’s first cry ever dies of a postpartum hemorrhage”.

Earl Padgett, a plastic surgeon, (Slide 17) was well known to students for his strong ego and caustic wit. (Slide 18) I think the caricature captures this. To scrub with him was a fearful experience. Some of you may be familiar with the Padgett dermatome which revolutionized skin grafting and around which there were some unsavory patent issues.

Perhaps my favorite giant of all was “Pappy Neff” as we called him behind his back. (Slide 19) He had graduated from the proprietary University Medical College in Kansas City in 1897 and did an internship in New York and studied abroad before establishing a pediatric practice in Kansas City. He

became the professor of Pediatrics in 1924. He maintained a stylish private practice to support himself and chaired the department till his retirement receiving only \$300 a year. His weekly clinical pediatric conferences covered two years and in that time we learned about most of the disorders described in the Holt and McIntosh textbook, while writing up each case in detail for our notebooks.

(Slide 20) As the caricature suggests he refused to be photographed with black children, though many were cared for by him and presented in his conferences.

This was a wonderful way to learn.

Needless to say there were other giants and semi-giants and it was the closeness of all of them to us, their obvious importance to the medical school, the fact that they were authority figures in our eyes and the authors of the textbooks we used that made us feel privileged to “sit at their feet” and learn. The complexity of today’s medical institutions and the enormous number of textbooks, journals and multi-authored articles doesn’t permit giants to loom so large to medical students and residents in the same way. Great teachers and important role models are

everywhere but they never seem to be all-knowing and probably will not be so indelibly etched on the memories of their students. Recently I received an advertisement for a service called "Up to date with Hematology and Oncology" that promised access on the world wide web, CD Rom, or Palm Pilot to dozens of the greatest minds in both specialties. I recognized a few names on the list and have met some of the people but, even though they may be great minds, they remain in the distance. In a recent issue of the Kansas City Star there was a very complimentary article about Dr. Jared Grantham. I was reminded of my thoughts about the changes in our view of outstanding physicians when he said that when his research into Polycystic Kidney Disease began 30 years ago he was virtually alone, but that today there are 300 researchers in this field.

In closing I'd like to mention Dr. Major's first book that was published in 1931, 6 years before the first edition of his better known Physical Diagnosis text. The name of the book is "The Doctor Explains" and at the present time, when there is so much criticism of the way in which doctors fail to

communicate with their patients, it seems a timely topic.

In the forward he writes that the book is an attempt to explain why the physician uses certain tests, how he got them and what bearing they have upon his diagnosis and treatment. He adds that it also attempts to show that the methods of treatment and diagnosis employed by physicians are the logical result of scientific discoveries in the life sciences, but that modern medicine belongs to no school except the school of experience and that, while it reveres its masters, their opinions have no force of authority except that which their experience confers upon them. Actually the book, which is very readable, contains a lot of interesting historical information in addition to the things which were promised in the forward.

The first chapter explains the physical examination and following it are chapters with such interesting titles as 1) Seeing the Invisible through the Microscope 2) The Role of the Blood 3) The Mysteries of Blood Pressure 4) Hypersensitive People 5) The Dangers of Sugar and 6) The Malady of Venus.

These are so much more imaginative than the titles in the Physical Diagnosis text. In an Afterward he comments that all progress which medical science has made is a history of man's attempt to stay on this planet as long as possible. Such progress seems to be increasing life expectancy in at least parts of the world while in others, infectious diseases are doing just the opposite.

I think Dr. Major would be pleased that today I have spent time with you reminiscing about the institution in which you have had your training and about the giants who are part of its legacy. And for those of you who are completing your training I feel assured that you have benefited from the wisdom and experience of your masters here and that it is now time for you to move on to continue learning and acquiring your own experiences. I hope you all find in your lives as physicians both pleasure and excitement in learning, in serving patients and in helping to shape the health care of the future. My years in the profession have given me that and so much more. And as for the question I posed as a title for this presentation, I'm sure there are giants around,

but we are just not as aware of them and probably they don't have such profound influences on our individual lives.