

Howard F. Root, M.D., 1890-1967

Priscilla White, M.D., Boston

On Nov. 17, 1967, Howard Root died quietly in his sleep at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts, as the result of coronary heart disease. Characteristically ignoring himself, he had spent the evening of November 16 making rounds and planning vacations for Fellows and Trainees.

His death was a tremendous loss, not only to relatives, associates, and friends, but also to people throughout the world, physicians and laymen alike, with an interest in diabetes. The confidence of his peers is shown in his many offices. He was President of the American Diabetes Association 1949-50 and of the International Diabetes Federation 1961-67; President of Massachusetts Medical Society 1956-57, and the Vice-President of the Postgraduate Medical Institute in Boston. He was lecturer in Internal Medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Root was born Aug. 28, 1890, in Ottumwa, Iowa. He was graduated from Harvard College in 1913 and from Harvard Medical School in 1919. From 1913 to 1915 he did settlement house work in Boston. He was an intern at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston 1919-20 and in 1920 was a May Fellow at The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Returning to Boston, he began in September, 1920, a lifelong association with Dr. Elliott P. Joslin in the practice of internal medicine, with especial reference to diabetes mellitus. During more than forty-six years he was an active member of the staff of the New England Deaconess Hospital and it was there on Aug. 7, 1922, that he gave, for the first time in this hospital, an injection of insulin to a patient with diabetes. He served in many capacities at the Deaconess Hospital and at one time was its Physician-in-Chief. When in January, 1952, the activities of Dr. Joslin and his associates were organized into a group practice named the Joslin Clinic, he became the first Medical Director, a position he held until his death.

Throughout his professional life, in addition to caring for many patients in the office and hospital, he spent much time in organizing instruction for diabetic patients and their families, and until the end, took an active part in actual teaching. He organized the first

Diabetes Fair. He spoke year after year at many meetings of medical societies throughout the United States and also in many countries of North and South America, Europe and Asia. He wrote extensively on a wide variety of subjects and was a frequent contributor to medical journals. He collaborated with Dr. Joslin and others in the writing of several editions of *The Treatment of Diabetes Mellitus*. With Dr. L. S. McKittrick he wrote a monograph on *Surgery and Diabetes* which appeared in 1928. He and Dr. Priscilla White were authors of a book entitled *Diabetes Mellitus* published in 1956.

In 1948 Dr. Root became chairman of a committee appointed by the American Diabetes Association to increase public information about diabetes and to discover "unknown diabetics" in order to bring them under early treatment. This nationwide program soon grew to a large-scale effort with the now well-known annual Diabetes Detection Week each November.

Dr. Root received many honors in addition to the high posts to which he was elected in various societies. These included an honorary Doctorate by Suffolk University, Boston (1953), the Banting Medal of the American Diabetes Association (1950), and the Banting and Best Medal of the Czechoslovakian Medical Society (1961). He held honorary membership in the Association Argentina de Dietologia, Sociedad Medica de Santiago, Chile, and La Sociedad Medico Quirurgica del Guayas.

In his last years, as its President, Dr. Root devoted much time, energy and thought to the Diabetes Foundation of Boston, a charitable trust organized to support and sponsor research in diabetes, to maintain and improve the instruction of diabetic patients and their families, to sponsor summer camps for diabetic children and to foster such other activities as may benefit persons with diabetes. As it turned out, it was particularly appropriate that on November 1, some two weeks before his sudden death, he was honored for his work for Diabetes Foundation at a reception held at the Science Museum in Boston and attended by some 300 friends.

His mind was a scintillating one. In addition to his

brilliance, he possessed a charming, gay spirit. He was truly devoted to his patients and they to him. He taught, he guided, he directed, he inspired his associates.

In 1921 Dr. Root was married to Hester King; she died in 1954. He was married in 1956 to Mrs. Kathleen Berger, who survives him, as do his three children, Hester F.; Stephen N. and Dr. Howard F. Root, Jr., and five grandchildren.

In recent years, during which he travelled so extensively, Mrs. Root, an educator and author, was his constant companion and is known and loved by friends

in many countries.

On November 20 a memorial service was held in Boston at the Old South Church, in which Dr. Root had worked energetically for many years and served as Deacon and Moderator. In a moving tribute before an audience notable for the diversity of religious background of those present, Dr. Frederick M. Meek remarked that "His colleagues, his associates, the world of medicine salute him with gratitude and respect; and in the field of diabetes medicine and control, succeeding generations will recall him as pioneer and creative practitioner."

BOOK REVIEWS

DIABETIC CARE IN PICTURES, *Helen Rosenthal, B.S., and Joseph Rosenthal, M.D. Fourth Edition, \$6.50. 227 pages, 105 figures, 10 color plates. Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott, 1968.*

There is no doubt that the incidence of diabetes in the population is increasing each year. Today, the availability of insulin or oral hypoglycemic agents, proper diet and antibiotics has prolonged the life of the diabetic to an almost normal life expectancy. Nationwide diabetes detection programs are also finding more and more asymptomatic diabetics. These millions of diabetics and their families are in dire need of a simplified text about diabetes. *Diabetic Care in Pictures* is prepared for the use of the patient and fulfills this need.

The authors are to be congratulated for a clear, descriptive, verbal and graphic presentation of diabetic diets; insulin preparations and the equipment available for their injection; urine testing; personal hygiene, foot care and Buerger-Allen exercise. About one third of the book is devoted to diets for diabetics. This portion of the book is comprehensive and includes many of the current food products. The food exchange lists are detailed and easy to understand. There are sample diabetic diets adjusted to meet sodium restriction, a bland, a low residue and a liquid diet.

Questions which the diabetic or his family may ask regarding obesity, heredity, marriage, pregnancy, exercise and alcoholic beverages are briefly but adequately answered by the authors.

My only criticism is that the authors did not include the directions or indicate the importance of obtaining a spot check urine specimen for sugar and/or acetone. A sample chart showing the date with the before breakfast and before dinner or before bedtime urine sugar results is also recommended. This type of daily record is most helpful in diabetes management.

I highly recommend the book to all of my diabetic patients, their families, and interns and residents. I suggest that the book be published in a paperback edition to reduce the cost and make it available to more patients.

CLINICAL DIABETES MELLITUS, *John Malins. First Published Edition, \$19.00, 502 pages 50 illustrations, 105 figures and*

tables. Eyre and Spottiswoode, Ltd., Publishers and by Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press) Ltd., Bungay, Suffolk, England. (Distributed in U.S.A. by Barnes and Noble, Inc., New York), 1968.

One might term this an unsophisticated clinical textbook by a sophisticated clinician whose career spans a quarter century steeped in some "twelve thousand newly diagnosed cases of diabetes." Taking dead aim at needs of the full time practitioner, the author makes no pretense at heavy treatment of the controversial and theoretical but, rather pursues the straight and narrow objectives of individual patient needs and therapeutic realities. The style is neither prolix nor perfunctory and the authors' opinions are couched in a generous bibliography. Those who might consider its tenor "middlebrow" should be reminded that perhaps thousands of less initiated physicians seeing diabetics need just such a treatise to tidy up their approach to a disease whose victims are all too often undiscovered, misdiagnosed, uneducated, undertreated and, indeed, sometimes overtreated.

Entertaining reading is provided by such uncommonly detected clinical signs as "white marks on clothing"—defined as "a white crystalline deposit on trousers and shoes from splashes of urine—associated with heavy glycosuria—noticed for years" before the patient presents to the physician. The female counterpart of this phenomenon is characterized as "stiff underclothes" from a little stress incontinence. A dash of British humor is gleaned from the remark that "an unusual deposit in the chamber pot is still mentioned but rarely now that this diagnostically useful article is falling into desuetude."

Among the chapters deserving special emphasis are: The diagnosis of diabetes (Chapter 4) delineating precise limitations and hazards of interpretation of glucose tolerance tests, and diabetic ketosis (Chapter 5), which is presented with fascinating clarity and eloquent simplicity. Indeed this meaty exposition conveys more practical knowledge in sixteen pages than most standard texts achieve in twice the space. That is not to say it could not be more complete, however.

Any reviewer with extensive patient experience in diabetes would recognize Malins as a keenly perceptive clinician with a firm grasp of the sober realities to be faced in applying cur-