

## BOOK REVIEWS

**THE PERIPATETIC DIABETIC**, By Margaret Bennett, \$5.95, 338 pages, New York, Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1969.

Most books written for diabetics fall into one of several categories. (1) The authors are physicians of varying writing ability who are well intended but often pontifical and ponderous. (2) The authors are patients who use the "true confessions" approach resulting in a maudlin tale of "I'm glad I had diabetes because it made me a success." (3) The third type of book is written by polished writers with some news reporting ability who use urbane, polished phraseology with a result that is well written but, alas, neither authentic nor helpful.

Somehow *The Peripatetic Diabetic* escapes all these and is a fresh, insouciant caper with a "button-down collar and country-club" approach. This is strictly *not* a book for the beginner nor for the uneducated or confused. Of course, this may be a virtue since most available present-day books either present a monotonous "how to boil your urine" approach or even worse, infer that since the diagnosis of diabetes has sealed the patient's doom anyway, he might as well live his life gloriously floating on a sea of glycosuria.

It is pleasant to find a book written by skillful writers who understand diabetes and respect it but are not relegated to a life of test tube worship for its own sake. It is a book for those who do wash regularly, are capable of something beyond the sports section and comic book level and apparently enjoy other things besides the late-late television movie.

Actually, this is two books. In Part One, the authors, unable to resist the "how it happened to me" gambit, suffer from a fluffiness that sometimes makes diabetes sound like girl-to-girl chitchat. The chapter headings are gay with a Madison Avenue approach, such as "How Green Was My Tes-Tape," "Valley of the Dolls," "Go Spill It on the Mountain," "Eating Out of House and Home" but apparently there is a streak of latent voyeurism in many people that makes the intimate details of patient-physician relationships irresistible to them although these details are quite dull reading to others. The authors also name-drop with great abandon, joyfully chattering their way from place to place and from meal to meal and while they do discuss in some detail some of the "sins" available to diabetics, evidently their "thing" is eating. Perhaps physicians would benefit even more than patients from reading the first part of the book since it is difficult to understand how any one or two persons could have so many misconceptions con-

cerning diabetes. If not exaggerated, this is an indictment of the teaching available to diabetics. The authors are obviously above average in intellectual capacity and it is frightening to think what happens to new patients who are less than Rhodes scholars in mental ability.

For the educated, literate patient who appreciates the light touch in contrast to the "life is real, life is earnest" school of diabetes, the book can serve up some useful tidbits in a palatable manner. The useful rules in the chapter "La Diabétique Imaginaire" are basic and make sense even while the gleeful girls spoof themselves, their physicians, et al., with the air of happy college sophomores.

Part Two of the book is a gastronomic orgy compared to some of the more Spartan regimens outlined in other books for diabetics and could well be labeled an Escoffier Tour of the Isles of Langerhans. The girls *do* love to eat and in this respect, the book performs its most useful function since those diabetics whose palate and cuisine are developed for the finer things in life need chafe no longer at the limitations. Some of the foods mentioned, sauerbraten, pear amandine and cherries flambe, will be difficult to fit into the diabetic regimen no matter what and the effort preparing some of these exotic delights is such that many amateur cooks will be too tired to eat anyway. It is true that pizza, for example, is nothing more than carbohydrate, protein and fat, but the trick with this, as with all diets, is to fit it within the limitations imposed by the diabetic condition. The gourmet life also has certain limitations other than caloric. One is not likely to overindulge in broiled lobster at five dollars even if it is equivalent to only two ounces of meat. Aware of this, the ubiquitous authors admit that not many are likely to overeat truffles at three dollars an ounce.

In summary, this is not the book for the new diabetic, the confused diabetic, the brown-lunch-bag set or the person with diabetes who is not firmly rooted in the principles of caring for his condition. This is a book for the sophisticated diabetic who is tired of the boredom of the wholesome but simple life and has the patience, ingenuity and desire for the exotic splurge in this witty compendium of fabulous recipes that even most nondiabetics do not eat too often. Although it is possible to disagree with portions of the book, if you are really a metabolic jet setter with a yen for gourmet fare, your physician will probably be delighted if you stay even within these liberal boundaries. In this case, the book is a "must."