

Herman Otto Mosenthal

Second President of the American Diabetes Association 1941-42

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Herman Otto Mosenthal, a founder and the first president of the New York Diabetes Association in 1935, and also the second president of the American Diabetes Association, died on April 24, 1954.

Dr. Mosenthal was born in New York City on July 8, 1878. He was the son of Joseph Mosenthal who had migrated to the United States from Kassel, Germany, in 1853. The beloved elder Mosenthal was a musical composer and conductor of no little fame. He was violinist in the Philharmonic Orchestra and a member of the first chamber-music string quartet in the United States. For many years he served as organist in the Calvary Episcopal Church and was conductor of the famed Mendelssohn Glee Club of New York City. There can be little wonder that his offspring loved the artistic and even made an art of the science of medicine.

Dr. Mosenthal was graduated from Columbia College in 1899 with an A. B. degree. He had his preliminary medical education at the University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, from which he received his Doctorate in Medicine in 1903. He interned in the Medical Division of the New York Hospital (1904-06) and also in the New York Foundling Hospital (1906-07). His subsequent half-century of service to medicine carried many appointments. Between 1908 and 1910, he was Attending Physician at Seton Hospital; during the same period he was Attending Physician to the outpatient department of the New York Hospital.

Dr. Mosenthal's leaning was in the direction of biological chemistry, which in those days was still a young science. Between 1908 and 1914, he was instructor and associate in the Department of Biological Chemistry at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons. In 1910, he became Attending Physician in Diseases of Metabolism at the Vanderbilt Clinic, and Assistant Visiting Physician to the Presbyterian Hospital of New York City. In this period he became closely associated with the famous Janeways, both father and son. In the summer of 1912, he studied under Schleyer in Würtemberg, Germany. Dr. Mosenthal held his New York appointments until 1914, when the Johns Hopkins Medical

School lured him to Baltimore as Associate Professor of Medicine with Dr. Theodore Janeway. When Dr. Janeway left for service in the first World War in 1917, Dr. Mosenthal became Acting Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins; he held this position until 1918.

In 1919, he returned to his Alma Mater to become an Associate in Medicine, and at the same time started his private practice of medicine. In 1920, he became Professor of Medicine and Chief of the Department of Medicine of the New York Post-graduate Medical School and Hospital; he held these positions until 1935. At the Post-graduate Hospital he established and directed probably the first U.S. metabolic clinic.

Among his other staff positions were appointments as Senior Attending Physician to the Reconstruction Hospital Unit of the New York Post-graduate Medical School and Hospital (1930), Consulting Physician at Sea View Hospital (1931); later, Visiting Physician to the same institution. In 1940, he was made Honorary Consulting Physician to the Hospital's Division of Metabolism. From 1931 to 1946, he was Visiting Physician to the 4th Division of Bellevue Hospital. From 1934 to 1947, he was Clinical Professor of Medicine at Columbia University. From 1946 to 1951, he was Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine at the New York Medical College. At the time of his death, he was Consultant in Medicine at the New York University Hospital, the New York Infirmary, Goshen Hospital, and St. Luke's Hospital in Newburgh, New York.

He was a Diplomate of the American Board of Internal Medicine and a Fellow of the American College of Physicians and of the New York Academy of Medicine. He was a member of the Association of American Physicians, the American Society for Clinical Investigation, the American Gastro-enterological Association, the Society of Experimental Biology and Medicine, and the International Society of Gastro-enterology. He belonged to Nu Sigma Nu Fraternity and to the Century Club.

Dr. Mosenthal had a genius for organization. For several years before the creation of the New York Diabetes Association, he had assiduously and tirelessly

explored many channels to create professional interest in the formation of an association which would foster organized interest in the field of diabetes in the New York area. It was not until 1934, when the late Dr. Charles F. Bolduan of the Department of Health of New York City matched plans with his, that the New York Diabetes Association came into being. Dr. Mosenthal engineered the raising of the necessary funds and contributed the organizational knowledge which made possible the foundation of the Association.

Dr. Mosenthal's horizon extended far beyond the New York area. There had been kindled in him the urge to see an influential national association dedicated to the problems of diabetes, both professional and sociologic. Early in the year 1939, he announced to several of the members of the Board of Directors of the New York Diabetes Association that he was on his way to Cincinnati to talk over with Dr. Cecil Striker and with Dr. William Muhlberg, another patriarch of organized diabetes in this country, the possibility of creating an American diabetes association. He was given the blessing of the New York group with a proviso, to the advantage of which he was keen enough to subscribe, that he would not under any circumstances accept the first presidency of any national organization if or when it were created. It was felt that the national association would obtain its greatest impetus if Dr. Mosenthal were not in the Chair but remained in the ranks to do the actual spade-work. He had long since demonstrated to his friends in the New York area that he was by nature a tenacious worker who had inherited just sufficient Teutonic stick-to-itiveness—at times even exasperating to his confreres—to achieve any goal he might set for himself. With Mosenthal behind the project, it was a foregone conclusion that the very best talent in the country would be enlisted as an organizing group. The quality of the founding body of the American Diabetes Association proved that this confidence had not been misplaced. The Association grew like a weed into one of the few powerful national organizations in the interest of public welfare controlled strictly by physicians. Dr. Mosenthal became the second President of the Association, succeeding Dr. Cecil Striker.

Dr. Mosenthal lived to see the monument he had built in the New York Diabetes Association express its appreciation of his efforts. On November 10, 1953, the Board of Directors made a gesture to implement its gratitude to its organizer by making him Honorary President. In his letter of acceptance, Dr. Mosenthal stated: "It is now forty-seven years since I began to be interested in diabetes—first, under Dr. Theodore Jane-

way, being retained as his assistant, especially for the treatment of diabetes, at a time when virtually nobody in the country did anything about diabetes. In 1912 I started what, I believe, was the first successful diabetes clinic in the United States, at the Vanderbilt Clinic. In 1915, a similar effort was made by Walter Campbell in Toronto. I imagine it was really the successful launching of clinics that built in the early days the cornerstone of the public health interest which under the constant needling of Charles Bolduan was represented in the creation of the New York Diabetes Association and the American Diabetes Association."

On the passing of Dr. Mosenthal, the Directors of the New York Diabetes Association adopted the following resolutions:

Whereas, Doctor Herman O. Mosenthal departed this life on April 24, 1954, and

Whereas, he fathered the New York Diabetes Association and was, as well, a guiding genius behind the creation of the American Diabetes Association, and

Whereas, Doctor Mosenthal's untiring missionary efforts made possible the growth of both organizations into powerful agencies serving mankind not only in this hemisphere but, by extension of the ideals and principles which he thereby fostered, throughout the world, and

Whereas, he was the first President of the New York Diabetes Association and the second President of the American Diabetes Association, and

Whereas, on November 10th, 1953, in electing him Honorary President of the New York Diabetes Association, the members of this organization sought to express while he still lived the high esteem in which he was held and the Association's gratitude for his many faithful services, and

Whereas, the Board of Directors of the New York Diabetes Association would at this time memorialize and document for the historical knowledge of future Boards the Association's indebtedness to the late Doctor Herman O. Mosenthal,

Therefore, Be it Resolved: that the members of the said Board do express their profound sorrow in the passing of the greatest of the Association's benefactors, and that they do by this instrument gratefully acknowledge for formal inclusion in the archives of this Association the tireless devotion of Doctor Herman O. Mosenthal to the cause of diabetics, present and future, and that they do humbly bespeak the sentiments of all of his erstwhile fellow-members in the Association when they resolve:

"Well done, good and faithful servant!"