

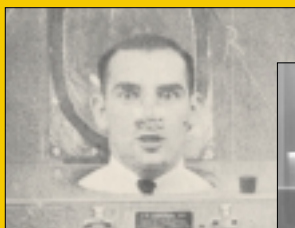


WHO WAS YOUR BEST TEACHER?

If we would be negligent not to mention her nephrology notes, or lax not to wax on his elucidation of lymph, let us know. For an upcoming story, we're looking for the greatest teachers ever to assume the lectern at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Send us your votes and anecdotes.

NOT-SO-OLD DOCS, NOT-SO-NEW TRICKS

Robert A. Zolten, MD '64, writes that he is the "bewildered young man" on page 40 of the July issue. Being bewildered and all, he doesn't recall much about the circumstances of the photo, just that he was on the yearbook staff and they "took a lot of silly pictures for that book." He sent us an updated photo:



1963



2000

WELL WORN

In "Quick on Their Feet," by Edwin Kiester Jr. (July 2000), there is a picture of Company C of the army's medical division taken in 1944. On the same page is a picture of Dr. Davenport Hooker, our professor of anatomy. How proud I felt to be pictured on the same page with such a great teacher. (I'm third from the left in the front row.) He took charge of our lives, and we lived and breathed anatomy and histology the entire freshman year. Drs. John Donaldson and Trepheena Humphrey were also a part of the process.

After graduation and a rotating internship, I was accepted for a surgical residency but had to wait a year because returning veterans had priority to complete their training. So I was referred to the anatomy department to be an instructor for the school year 1948-49, the best unplanned year of my life. This was the same year that Dr. Priman arrived from Europe and joined the staff. Discussions over bag lunches in the library on

the fourth floor of Pennsylvania Hall gave me a whole new appreciation for these giants. I no longer trembled in their presence but was awed by their accomplishments, dedication, and humanity. Dr. Hooker overwhelmed me when he gave me his artillery officer's boots from World War I, which fit me perfectly. Several times we discussed my staying on to teach anatomy as a career, and I was genuinely tempted. Leaving to enter surgical residency was with mixed feelings.

Now, a half century later, I'm still doing surgery and using my anatomy knowledge regularly. And I still have Dr. Hooker's boots.

Perry H. Engstrom, MD '47
Wahpeton, North Dakota

GIVING FLOREY ET AL. THEIR DUE

This just in to our Department of Amplification:

A minor editing change in "Quick On Their Feet" (July 2000) minimized the contributions of Howard Florey and his team at Oxford University in the wartime development of penicillin. Although Alexander Fleming first discovered penicillin's antibiotic properties in 1929, reporting that an errant mold blew into an open lab window, settled on a forgotten petri dish and killed its bacterial contents, it was Florey's group that actually developed it into a curative "miracle drug," and Fleming always generously gave them credit. Their feat won the Nobel Prize for Florey, Ernst Chain, and Edward Abraham. Chain and Abraham were knighted; Florey became a life peer.

Chain deciphered penicillin's molecular structure just over 60 years ago; Abraham and the biologist Norman Heatley devised a way to cultivate it in flat containers (first using hospital bedpans). Heatley conducted the first hugely successful animal experiments, in 1940. A few months later, penicillin was tried for the first time on a human patient, an Oxford police constable suffering from a horrifying staphylococcal and streptococcal infected wound. Although the infection was checked, the patient died when the meager supply of the new substance ran out.

The Oxford group was also responsible for the first successful use of penicillin on an American patient. Anne Miller, 32, wife of a Yale administrator, was comatose, with fevers

spiking to 107 and so riddled with infection that the bacteria count entry on her hospital chart used the symbol for infinity. Yale neuro-physiologist John Fulton, a close friend and colleague of Florey's, asked his help. Fortunately Heatley was in New Jersey helping Merck and Co. set up a penicillin manufacturing line and delivered a small amount of the precious medicine to New Haven. At 3:30 p.m. one Saturday Anne Miller received her first injection of 850 units—an infinitesimal amount by today's standards. (The maximum amount she received was calculated at 35,000 units.) By Sunday morning her temperature was normal, and she sat up and ate a hearty breakfast. Ms. Miller lived to the age of 92 and died only last fall.

The first supplies of penicillin were reserved for the military. But by late 1944 (as Pitt med students soon learned) there was enough for civilian patients, too.

By the way, just east of Pitt, at its old athletic rival campus Penn State, in 1935 a young graduate student, Roger Reed, sought approval for research into pharmaceutical applications for Fleming's discovery. His faculty advisor convinced him there was no future in it.

In a place of honor in my living room stands one of the original penicillin vessels, a flat, oblong, spouted ceramic container designed by Heatley and manufactured in the famous Staffordshire potteries. A battalion of unsung "penicillin girls" cultivated and poured off the lifesaving stuff. Heatley resurrected it from an outbuilding behind his cottage near Oxford and presented it to me. This wiry, cheerful man was not knighted and never received a shilling for his contribution, but was intensely—and understandably—proud of his and the Florey group's work.

Ed Kiester Jr.
Menlo Park, California

NOBLEST KNOBIL

I enjoyed your tribute to Dr. Knobil, who taught me physiology at Pitt and my son Joel physiology at UT Houston Medical. He was a grand guy, and I think that I am an endocrinologist because of his influences.

Fred E. Ciarochi, MD '69
Duncanville, Texas

**SEND US LETTERS, MEMORIES, RUMINATIONS,
EVEN GREAT PHOTOS. (WE MAY EDIT LETTERS FOR LENGTH AND CLARITY.)
PITT MED, 400 CRAIG HALL, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH, PITTSBURGH, PA 15260
FAX: (412) 624-1021. E-MAIL: medmag@pitt.edu**