

A Pediatric Festschrift in Honor of Robert Dean Mercer, M.D.

This issue of the *Cleveland Clinic Quarterly* is a compilation of articles by colleagues, former fellows, and students of Dr. Mercer, and is our way of saying thanks to a gifted physician, teacher, and friend who is now retired from the Department of Pediatrics at the Cleveland Clinic.

Bob Mercer was The Cleveland Clinic Foundation's first pediatrician and the guiding force behind the development and growth of the Department of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine. He served as chairman of the Department of Pediatrics from 1951 until 1980, and then formally retired on December 31, 1982.

Bob graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School in 1943 and served his internship and residency at University Hospitals in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He served as a captain in the United States Army Medical Corps from 1945 to 1947. On leaving the service, he spent two years as a fellow in pediatrics and a research fellow in pathology at Boston Children's Hospital. It was during his tenure as a research fellow that Drs. Farber, Diamond, Mercer and colleagues published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* the first successful treatment of acute leukemia in children with aminopterin to induce temporary remissions. Bob then went to Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine where he was assistant professor of pediatrics and obstetrics before coming to The Cleveland Clinic Foundation. An ardent generalist, Dr. Mercer has worked in an amazing number of what are now subspecialties in pediatrics. He was the first to diagnose cytomegalic inclusion disease in the living patient, and the first to recognize that larval parasites are the cause of the disease now known as visceral larval migrans. He was the first to use ACTH in the treatment of myoclonic seizures in infancy and inflammatory bowel dis-



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ease. He was also one of the first to use ACTH and nitrogen mustard in the treatment of the childhood nephrotic syndrome. In 1960, recognizing the importance of a new technique, he learned to culture lymphocytes of blood and bone marrow and established the first laboratory for the study of chromosomes in northern Ohio.

Dr. Mercer's forte has always been visual diagnosis, an art nearly lost in modern medicine.

He has made exemplary use of the very basic skills physicians must possess. He has approached each case with the thoroughness that emphasizes using one's eyes and ears to their full capabilities. An unsolved problem has always challenged and brought out the best in Bob, and he has thrived on the challenge. His colleagues and students have long marvelled at his ability to reach the heart of a problem in a direct and unpretentious manner. In addition to being a model clinician, Bob has been the dominant force in the education and training of a large number of residents in pediatrics since the first resident was appointed in 1952. He is highly respected for his patience and exceptional ability to stimulate his students to read and learn. Being an avid reader of the medical literature, he has always impressed students and colleagues with his clinical acumen on rounds. Through his bedside teaching and classroom slide presentations, Bob has passed his interest in visual diagnosis and syndrome identification to his pediatric residents.

In addition to being an exemplary physician, Bob Mercer has given time and direction to a number of local and national organizations. He was president of the Northern Ohio Pediatric Society from 1963 to 1964, secretary-treasurer of the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics from 1957 to 1960, chairman of District 5 of the American Academy of Pediatrics from 1964 to 1966, and an examiner for the

American Board of Pediatrics from 1976 to 1982. He was one of three individuals who incorporated the Cuyahoga County Affiliate of the United Cerebral Palsy Association in 1950, and he has served on its Board of Directors and Medical Professional Committee throughout his professional career.

As part of his interest in visual diagnosis and syndrome identification in pediatrics, Bob Mercer has accumulated a priceless collection of more than 9,000 slides of interesting cases and syndromes. Former fellows and colleagues from many countries have added rarities to his collection.

Gifted physician, teacher, humanitarian and friend, Bob Mercer has been an inspiration to scores of physicians. The Cleveland Clinic Foundation has been extremely fortunate to have a man of his caliber, spirit and generosity. This Pediatric Festschrift is our way of commemorating his lasting influence on our professional lives.

We begin this issue with a paper that Bob Mercer wrote for me a couple of years ago. Interspersed with his ever-present sense of humor, this article shows Bob Mercer as a compassionate physician and diagnostician in a way that I could never do in my own words.

JAMES P. ORLOWSKI, M.D.

Department of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine
Guest Editor