



Howard Scott VanOrdstrand, MD (1911–1988)

THE FESTSCHRIFT THAT follows is dedicated to the memory of my friend, colleague, and mentor, Howard Scott VanOrdstrand, a pioneer in the field of occupational lung disease and a physician whose dedication to his patients remains an inspiration to those of us who knew him.

Van, as he was known by his colleagues, was born on March 21, 1911, in Wichita, Kansas. His parents, Winfield Scott VanOrdstrand and Louise Hellum, came from Dutch and German backgrounds, respectively, and passed on their tremendous capacity for work to young Van. Van attended junior high and high school in Wichita, and his childhood memories included playing the violin (about which he had mixed feelings), working in his father's grocery store, and visiting the Boeing Aircraft plant. He also had a clear recollection of the severe prairie dust storms and the coughing these storms caused in people, which may indeed have initiated his interest in chest diseases.

After graduating from high school in 1928, Van entered the University of Wichita, received his bachelor of arts degree in three years, and then graduated from the University of Kansas School of Medicine in 1935. At medical school, he joined the Phi Beta Pi medical fraternity and became its president—and also an expert at making tasty alcoholic beverages. His expertise at making these beverages stayed with him and earned him the reputation of being the best “punch maker” for the Christmas parties.

Following completion of his internship at the University of Kansas hospitals, Van came to the Cleveland Clinic for his training in medicine and pulmonary diseases, influenced to do so by Dr. Russell



Haden, a hematologist at Kansas before moving to the Cleveland Clinic. It was during his fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic that Van met his future wife, Carlotta Baker, a grand-daughter of Elbert Hall Baker, long-time president of the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper. Carlotta and Van were married in 1939 and raised two children, John and Mary. The family was always close and loved their moments together.

Van joined the staff of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation in 1940 and formed the section of pulmonary disease within the Department of Cardiorespiratory Disease. In 1944, he entered the Army Medical Corps and served as a major in Hiroshima and elsewhere in Japan, England, France, and Manila during World War II. He also had the distinction of attending a fellow Kansan, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and received the Army Commendation Ribbon. Upon rejoining the Cleveland Clinic in 1947, he continued his career in pulmonary disease. In 1958, he formed the first full-fledged Department of Pulmonary Disease and held its chairmanship until 1973. At the Cleveland Clinic, he also served as the chairman of medicine from 1965 to 1970 and served 10 years on the board of governors (1958 to 1963 and 1965 to 1970). He also served on the faculty board and Board of Trustees of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation and was on the resident emeritus staff at the time of his death.

Van was a member of many prestigious medical and pulmonary societies. He was an active member of the American College of Chest Physicians and its president from 1973 to 1974, and he was chairman of the section in diseases of the chest of the American Medical Association from 1970 to 1972. Van was also

honored as the distinguished alumnus of the year by the University of Kansas School of Medicine in 1968.

Van's contributions to medical literature were impressive. He had well over 100 publications and was the principal author of the first paper in English reporting the occurrence of pneumonitis in workers exposed to beryllium oxide (berylliosis). This report, published in 1943, established him as the leading authority on beryllium lung disease and initiated a long and productive career in occupational lung disease, along with several appointments as a consultant to the beryllium industry all over the world. He co-directed the first international conference on occupational lung disease held at San Francisco in 1979 and sponsored by the American College of Chest Physicians.

Away from work, Van had two hobbies. One was curling, which he did with regularity at the Mayfield Country Club and some other tournament sites; the other was constantly repairing his cottage in Georgian

Bay, Canada. I always suspected, however, that he was better at medicine than any of his hobbies. His real love in life was being a physician.

The most inspiring aspect of Van's remarkable career was his performance as a physician. He was a patient's doctor and patient advocate before it became fashionable to profess to be so. He was gentle, humane, and sensitive to patients' every whim and need. "The patient is always right" was his guiding precept, and the most important outcome for him was a satisfied patient. He communicated very well with patients and referring physicians and was always available, affable, and accommodating. He was truly a gentleman among physicians and a physician among gentlemen. Those of us who came to know him loved him and will continue to learn from his example.

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