

IN MEMORIAM

Harold A. Shoemaker

1898-1960

No more devoted and inspiring personality has accorded the medical profession of any state than Dr. Harold A. Shoemaker. For 35 years Dr. Shoemaker served the University of Oklahoma School of Medicine and contributed to its growth in an exemplary manner. It would be difficult to find a physician in the state who has not profited from his wise counsel, his dedicated teaching and his magnanimous philosophy.

Dr. Shoemaker was born March 11, 1898, in New Ringgold, Pennsylvania. His Pennsylvania Dutch background provided fundamental values and a sly wit which accompanied him through life. After completing a degree in pharmacy at Valparaiso University in 1920 he joined the staff of the Pharmacy School at the University of Oklahoma. In 1925 he was appointed assistant professor of biochemistry and pharmacology at the School of Medicine. On separation of the departments, Dr. Shoemaker was appointed the first professor and chairman of our Department of Pharmacology. His Ph.D. in pharmacology was awarded by Yale University in 1931.

From 1939 to 1947 Dr. Shoemaker ably served as assistant dean and associate dean of the Medical School. It was during these years of World War II and its aftermath that the toll of exertion to the task of guiding the destiny of a struggling medical school through particularly troublesome times became evident. In 1947 he suffered a myocardial infarction. I remember clearly the indomitable spirit of his quiet acceptance of this perilous event. Continuing as vice-chairman of the Department of Pharmacology he devoted his usual vigor to the teaching of medical students and the affairs of the department. His distate for wasted moments and his keen mind provided rich diversions from his academic life. A superb photographer and naturalist, he recorded a great number of Oklahoma's wild flowers; a historian, he assembled a rich history of pharmacology and of our medical school; a researcher, he built much of his equipment and carried on his investigations with becoming dignity, accomplishment and disregard for personal glory.

Dr. Shoemaker's deep sense of devotion to the medical science of Oklahoma reached fruition in 1956 when he established the Oklahoma Poison Information Center — the third such center developed in the United States. Singlehandedly, despite meager financing, he built the Poison Center into an institution of inestimable value to physicians in the state. No detail was small enough to escape his complete attention. No matter the hour or distance he made himself immediately available to speak or act on toxicological matters. His pioneer service to poison control was even more commendable by virtue of his never seeking personal financial remuneration for such unstinting work. Dr. Shoemaker developed a remarkable knowledge of poisonous plants, accumulated a vast file of the myriad noxious compounds to which we are exposed, and systematized methods of poison treatment and prevention in an unparalleled manner.

Despite severe angina pectoris and the fatigue of a failing cardiovascular system, Dr. Shoemaker applied himself with ever increasing vigor to the humane task to which he had so diligently dedicated himself. He was nationally recognized as an outstanding toxicologist, bringing great credit to the school.

Dr. Shoemaker has played an integral part in the training of most physicians in the state. His mind has supplied rich information gained from long application to the study of pharmacology and toxicology — details not easily gained by close reading of the literature.

We all feel the great absence of his astute and dedicated presence which provided a dignified and inspirational background to the development of medicine in the State of Oklahoma.

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