

A SALUTE TO DR. WILLIAM B. BEAN

In 1974 the American Medical Association honored Dr. William B. Bean, Director of the Institute for the Medical Humanities, UTMB, by devoting to him the November issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine. The William B. Bean Festschrift included essays written by his colleagues and friends, and reprints of several papers by Dr. Bean. The concluding words of one contributor admirably summed up Dr. Bean's accomplishments:

His physician's bag contains more than the usual instruments and medicines carried by most practitioners; it also includes a large store of compassion, curiosity, and culture, which makes him a most versatile and uncommon teacher, clinician, and medical writer.

Dr. Bean began his career as a medical writer exactly forty years ago, in December 1937, when his first paper appeared in the American Heart Journal. The paper was a major study based on 300 cases of myocardial infarction, and attempted to correlate recorded symptoms with lesions observed at autopsy. At the time of his first publication, Dr. Bean was a Teaching Fellow in Medicine at Harvard University. In subsequent years he held various teaching positions in the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, and in 1948 he moved to the University of Iowa College of Medicine to head the Department of Internal Medicine. He has been with UTMB since 1974.

A distinguished medical educator and investigator, Dr. Bean holds an impressive publishing record. In the last forty years he has written nearly 500 scientific papers, essays and editorials, published about 700 book reviews, and contributed chapters to or edited about 100 books. His publications cover a wide range of topics: nutrition, rare diseases, myocardial infarction, medical education, medical ethics and history of

¹M.M. Cummings, "A Comment on William B. Bean's Medical Writing," Arch. Int. Med. 134:835, 1974.

medicine. He has recently completed editing the papers of Walter Reed (1851-1902).

In the summer of 1975 I had the unique opportunity of working with Dr. Bean's correspondence when I was at the National Library of Medicine, completing a traineeship program. (His papers have been deposited in the History of Medicine Division of this library, and will be available to researchers in the future.) I remember handling thousands of letters, seeing one famous name after another, and noting the signatures of Aldous and Julian Huxley, James Thurber, H.L. Mencken, E.B. White, Earl Scarlett, Lord Platt, Sir Francis Walsh, and so on. I remember arranging hundreds of letters written in response to such provocative essays as "A Testament of Duty: Some Strictures on Moral Responsibilities in Clinical Research," "A Critique of Criticism in Medicine and the Biological Sciences," "Caritas Medici," "Tower of Babel," and "Vitamania, Polypharmacy and Witchcraft."

Dr. Bean is known as a bibliophile and a strong supporter of libraries. He was appointed twice, by Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and Lyndon Johnson, to serve on the Board of Regents of the National Library of Medicine (1957-1961; 1965-1969). In an address delivered at the dedication ceremonies of the National Library of Medicine Building in 1961, he articulated the role libraries played in the development of medicine through the centuries. Referring to the past physicians, "our medical forebears," he said: "Through the careful and scholarly making and the wise use of books and libraries they built our great tradition. By following them we must add to it as physicians wise and humble in the care, the comfort, and sometimes in cure of our fellows in their sickness and in their sorrow."²

²W.B. Bean, "Physicians and Books," Bull. Med. Lib. Assoc. 50:166, 1962.

Since his arrival on the UTMB campus in 1974, Dr. Bean has been an invaluable supporter of the Moody Medical Library, donated numerous gifts and advised on rare book acquisitions. On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of his first scientific publication, we would like to express our appreciation for Dr. Bean's support of our cause and thank him for the various gifts he has given to the library.

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History of Medicine Collection