TRIBUTES TO
HARVEY STUART ALLEN


The sudden death of such a man as Harvey Stuart Allen at the very height of his career leaves us shaken and bewildered. His contagious, boyish enthusiasm, the infectious charm of his smile, his all-consuming devotion to his surgical work, which he practiced with rare skill and judgment, will be sorely missed by his patients, his profession, his colleagues and friends. As a devoted father he knew tragedy; as a husband he knew deep love, affection and happiness. We commemorate his life, and his death we mourn.

RICHARD H. YOUNG

W H OEVER has travelled in our northwestern states is certain to have been impressed by the grandeur of the Rockies, the fast-running trout streams, and the sweep of wide-open country. Montana, with its lumbering and mining industries, its facilities for hunting and fishing, contains the small city of Livingston. This is a railroad division point, a trade center for an extensive surrounding country, a mayor-council governed municipality, with a good public library situated at an altitude of 5,000 feet.

This is not the time, nor the place, to try to analyze those mysterious factors which shape a boy's life, or to discuss the relative importance of family and environment. However, I am sure I do not mis-state the facts when I say that the location of Livingston—forty-five miles north of Yellowstone Park, on the Yellowstone River—exerted a profound influence on Harvey Stuart Allen. He spent many summer vacation periods during his college and medical school days working in the famous national park. So impressed was he with the surrounding beauty, that he was influential in directing many young men thus to become acquainted with the vastness of the Northwest.

After attending the University of Washington, he came to Northwestern University Medical School as had many young medical students from the northwest before him. He went further east for his internship, returned to Passavant Hospital for the beginning of his surgical training, and remained there except for a short interlude in Boston, throughout his professional life.

He came to a medical school, with an enviable history, recently occupying a new building, with a dynamic Dean and a Chairman of the Department of Surgery appointed the same year that Dr. Allen received his Doctor of Medicine degree. In Passavant Hospital, he found an institution with an honored name which only four years previously had acquired a new building, a new location and a new staff.

In 1936, Harvey Allen began his association with our Department of Surgery as an instructor. It was an honor, which he had earned and deserved, to rise to the rank of Professor of Surgery, one of five Professors engaged in active teaching.

Resolutely and persistently, he devoted his attention to the study and treatment of burned patients. The wards of the Cook County Hospital offered unsurpassed opportunities for his work, which was recognized as being of a superior character and was supported generously by the National Research Council. Some doctors may unintentionally exhibit impatience and intolerance with patients in a large, often badly organized, charitable institution. On the contrary, students, interns and residents uni...
mously commented upon an almost complete change of personality as he left the private hospital patients, from whom he received remuneration for his services, and entered the wards where his free-bed patients, young and old, awaited his coming with confidence, hope and enthusiasm. Any surgeon’s colleagues may differ in their estimation of his abilities, personality, or kindness; his patients, however, are the real source of a true evaluation. Again, I am not mis-stating the facts when I say that Harvey Allen’s patients loved him.

Today, those of us who worked with him in the Hospital and Medical School remember his interest in seeing new places; his satisfaction in occupying a Fulbright teaching fellowship at the request of surgeons in the Scandinavian countries; of his unremitting and, perhaps unwise, intense occupation with his work; his ability under given and correct circumstances to relax and enjoy good food and entertainment.

When the Greeks made their eloquent saying that those whom the gods love die young, I believe they had his kind of death in mind. But at whatever age it might have overtaken him, Harvey Stuart Allen would have died young. His intense spirit, accomplishments, personality, devotion to his profession, his teaching abilities—all will evoke discussion among his colleagues in this Department of Surgery in the years to come. It is thus, that our immediate great loss may be compensated.

LOYAL DAVIS

FOR the third time in less than nine months Fate has struck a cruel blow at the faculty of the Medical School and the staff of Passavant Memorial Hospital. In that short time three of our ablest and most loved attending men have succumbed to cardiovascular disease. Thomas C. Douglass on October 9, 1954, Lawrence E. Hines on May 13, and now Harvey S. Allen on May 30, 1955. There was almost no warning of serious illness in Harvey’s case. On Saturday, two weeks before his death, he had an acute ten-minute attack of upper abdominal pain. Though unusual, he ascribed it to an intestinal upset. The following evening he had a second, more severe attack of twenty minutes’ duration and this time with some pain in the left arm. On Monday he consulted one of the medical men who advised hospitalization and study. Various tests were essentially negative except for one electrocardiogram which was suggestive of a limited anterior coronary involvement. Further electrocardiograms were inconclusive and after a week in the hospital and with no recurrence of pain or clinical symptoms Harvey returned to his home. He remained quietly at home, chafing under the enforced inactivity and feeling completely well. Sunday evening, May 29, just two weeks after the first attack of pain he complained of discomfort, of restlessness and inability to sleep. The doctor who had seen him daily in the hospital found no discernible change in his condition but suggested that Harvey return to the hospital. He agreed, got up and dressed, and then collapsed.

Harvey’s life was an inspiration to everyone around him for he was endowed with so many splendid qualities—a warm friendliness and love of people, a fine mind, a gay sense of humor, an infectious enthusiasm and a love of work. As a youngster on his father’s ranch in Montana he helped to shear sheep and pack fleeces and one can well believe that the master-word, Work, to paraphrase Osler, was written on the tablet of his heart and bound upon his forehead very early in life. During summer vacations, while attending the University of Washington, he worked as a clerk and travel agent in the hotels of Yellowstone Park, and some of his amusing stories of experiences in meeting and pacifying the great and near great made one realize that the lessons he learned in those busy summers were quite as important as those absorbed in college classes.

After four years at Northwestern University Medical School, an internship at Kings County Hospital and a surgical residency at Passavant Memorial Hospital, Harvey continued to work at Passavant for a second year and then
spent a third year at the Lahey Clinic under the sponsorship of Dr. G. Edmund Haggart on the Orthopedic service. Shortly before leaving for Boston he was married to Elizabeth Larned, a classmate at the University of Washington.

He returned to Chicago in the fall of 1936, and with the exception of the years spent in military service continued to work at Northwestern, at Passavant and at Cook County Hospital until his death.

In 1941 Harvey along with the other outstanding younger members of the faculty of Northwestern and the staff of its associated hospitals, formed the reactivated Base Hospital 12, and in February, 1942, left for Camp Custer, Michigan. The record of the trials and achievements of Base Hospital 12 in Oran, Naples, Rome and Livorno has been recorded in a number of contributions that have appeared from time to time in this Bulletin. The "work-habit" which was so outstanding a characteristic of Harvey's entire life was as strongly in evidence throughout his army service as it had always been. In 1944 he was awarded the Bronze Star and promoted to a Lieutenant Colonelcy. He had always been designated as one of the surgical consultants to proceed to Japan shortly before the conflict ended.

In the fall of 1945 he returned to Chicago and to his wife and the little daughter who had carried on with hope and courage, as had so many wives and youngsters during the lonely days of the interminable war years. He plunged into the work that was waiting for him—at the hospital, the Medical School and the Cook County Hospital. Early in 1946 he passed the competitive Civil Service examination for the attending staff at the Cook County Hospital and received the coveted appointment to the surgical staff. His faithful attendance, particularly in the care of the burned children in Ward 46, and of the complicated cases of hand injury admitted to the hospital from the Hand Clinic was an inspiring example to the resident staff and to the many visitors from near and far. Every Friday afternoon was given to a difficult operating schedule that often ended long after dinner time and only after the work was finished and the last dressings applied.

He served as Secretary of the Chicago Surgical Society for two years. He was appointed a member of the Subcommittee on Wounds and Burns of the National Research Council, elected to membership in the Central Surgical Association, the Western Surgical Association, the American Surgical Association, the American Society for Surgery of the Hand, and the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma. Both before and after the war he was an honored member of the Attending Staff of Passavant Memorial Hospital. To all of them he contributed his time and effort wholeheartedly and without stint.

In 1947 the little daughter to whom he had given added devotion and attention, if that were possible, as if to make up for the years lost during the war, succumbed to a rapidly developing lymphatic leukemia. That tragic loss served to make him if anything more interested in the children who came to him for care and more solicitous for their welfare. Many times as he watched some younger toddler away from the Staff Office at the hospital after a tedious and difficult dressing he would smile and say, "He's a great little guy."

Many honors came to him. In 1953 he was elected to membership in the Society of Clinical Surgery. Early in 1955 he was appointed Professor of Surgery at Northwestern. In the summer of 1954 he was invited to spend six months as a Fulbright Professor in the medical schools of the Scandinavian countries. He felt that he could not spend so long a time away from the hospital and medical school and compromised on a three months' visit. His account of a month's stay at the University of Aarhus, and a two months' stay at the University of Copenhagen is filled with interesting comments on the wholehearted cooperation that was accorded him by surgeons, house staffs, nurses and medical students; on the awakened interest in the problems of hand surgery and the treatment of burns, and of the gracious hospitality which was everywhere accorded to him and to Mrs. Allen. Brief visits with lectures to medical societies and universi-
ty students in Gothenberg, Oslo, Stockholm and Helsinki were crowded into the busy three months, and on the way home a week with the Hand Surgeons in London, a visit to Manchester and to the Burn Center at Birmingham completed a "good will" tour that one would like to think was characteristic of those made by our emissaries to other nations. Surely no finer contribution to international good will could be made than the efforts of Harvey and Mrs. Allen in bringing to Scandinavian surgeons and medical students the important lessons in the treatment of burns and in the care of injuries of the hand which he had worked out in his own experience and demonstrated so effectively in many clinical cases. A distinguished Danish surgeon wrote after Harvey's return, "He has given a tremendous impetus to the development of surgery of the hand in the Scandinavian countries."

It is probably unnecessary to attempt to evaluate at this time Harvey’s many contributions to surgery. An outstanding one was his realization and repeated demonstration of the importance of cleanly surgical care, of compression dressings, of early excision of devitalized tissue and of early grafting in the treatment of severe burns. He made many experimental and clinical contributions to the improvement of hand surgery. With Dr. Mason he “pounded out” in Italy the hand splint — the so-called universal splint—which permitted the surgeon to carry out consistently immobilization of the injured or burned hand in the “position of function.” Dr. Kanavel many years ago pointed out its importance. Dr. Mason and Harvey devised a simple but effective means by which even a novice could carry out the principle in his surgical practice.

Probably his most important contribution to surgery was the constant example of meticulous care, of exacting technique, of unceasing energy that he gave day after day to his students, his house officers and to all those who were associated with him. No task was too difficult, no hour too late, or too early, if there was work to be done or an emergency case that needed attention. Whether the patient was some one who was “important” or a dark colored pickaninny in the Childrens' Ward at “Cook County,” the care and attention the patient received were identical and wholeheartedly given. None of the many house officers who worked with Harvey at Passavant or at the Cook County Hospital will ever forget the hard work, the dynamic energy and the attention to detail that he so consistently exemplified as he carried out the constantly increasing demands that were made of him.

Some one said on hearing the sad news of his death, “How tragic! He had so much to give.” Those who were fortunate enough to work with him will always remember how generously and wholeheartedly he gave of his many talents throughout a life that was all too short and that was cut off much too soon.

Sumner L. Koch