

## *The Medical Heritage Center*

# HOUSE CALL



VOL. 5 NO. 2

WINTER 2002

## **Jonathan Forman, MD: A Visionary of the Last Century**

*By Paul Metzger, MD*

All too infrequently one of those “bigger than life” individuals appears in our midst and upon passing leaves an indelible mark on the community where he lived and served. Such a person was Jonathan Forman, MD.

Dr. Forman was not only a superb clinician and physician but also an environmentalist long before environmental issues were popular and a political activist. Among his many talents, Dr. Forman had developed an interest in writing during his undergraduate days at The Ohio State University and was a prolific writer throughout his life. From some of his writings and firsthand accounts we have a great deal of information about his entire professional life.

Typical of many young men in the early years of the twentieth century, Dr. Forman came from a rural background. Born in 1887 near Austinburg, a small village in Northeastern Ohio, he was an only child in a family where his father lived a somewhat reckless life involving horse racing and the like until Jonathan was born. Jonathan's father then expended much of his energy in making his son an educated man, intending for him to enter the ministry. Even though reared in a poor family, Jonathan related in later life that he could not remember a time when he did not have a fixed determination to go to college.

After attending a one-room schoolhouse, at age fourteen he enrolled in the Grand River Academy of Austinburg, one of the last of the old New England academies in the Western Reserve, founded in 1803. He had the impression that the local town boys considered him to be a “yokel” because he rode a horse to and from school each day. This impression drove Jonathan to push himself and, as a result, he was at the head of his class throughout his three years at the Academy.

Through a family acquaintance that worked with his

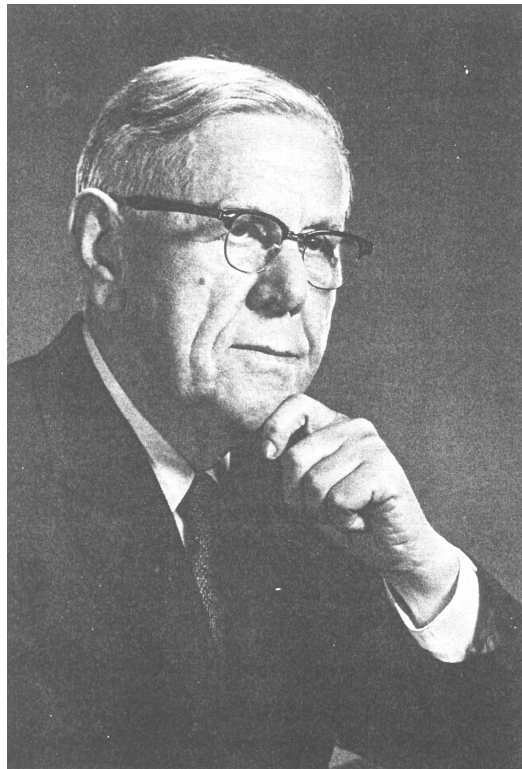
father, Jonathan became aware of the many opportunities available once one had a sound and useful education. From this exposure, he decided that he would pursue a legal career. He enrolled at The Ohio State University in 1906 and majored in liberal arts.

Progressing in his academic subjects, he moved on to biology and chemistry classes and realized that these areas had a much greater attraction than did a career in law. In his later reminiscences, he credits Drs. Francis Landacre and Albert Bleile for furthering his interest in anatomical and histological studies. He also felt that Dr. Landacre had an immense influence as Ohio State sought to develop the Colleges of Medicine and Dentistry.

From this background Dr. Forman decided to pursue a career in medicine. He initially considered the University of Michigan and the University of Pennsylvania. As he prepared to enroll, Dr. Bleile offered him a teaching fellowship in histological anatomy. With such an opportunity he decided to enroll in the Starling-Ohio Medical College, which at that time was an independent institution in Columbus. The fellowship paid his tuition at Starling-Ohio, allowed him to finish his undergraduate degree, and to teach histology to the veterinary medical students.

In August 1911, though still a medical student, he joined the Department

of Pathology at Starling-Ohio as a demonstrator under the supervision of Dr. Ernest Scott. He remained a member of the department until 1919. Dr. Forman attributed much of his direction and guidance during those years to Dr. Scott. A direct quote from some of Dr. Forman's writings state: “In the next twenty-three years, this man [Dr. Scott] influenced me more than anyone else. He was one of the greatest characters that I have ever known.”



*Dr. Jonathan Forman, c. 1960's*

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## Tea planned to honor nurses at the Medical Heritage Center

On Thursday, May 9, 2002, from 4-6 p.m. all central Ohio Nurses and friends of nursing are invited to a tea in the Medical Heritage Center to become acquainted with the nursing history project underway at the Center. Elizabeth Lenz, Dean of The Ohio State University College of Nursing will welcome guests, with further remarks offered by Barbara Van Brimmer, Curator of the Center and by Carol Robinson, nursing history project coordinator. Nursing collections will be displayed, including the nursing stamp collection of Mildred Newton, former Director of the College of Nursing. The four albums in the Newton collection contain several hundred stamps of historical significance which have been preserved by the Center in acid-free folders. These stamps depict nursing history, medical achievements, and Red Cross programs throughout the world. An early edition of Florence Nightingale's Notes on Nursing as well as other texts from the nursing archives will also be displayed.

### Calendar of Events

February 1 - June 1, 2002 The Art of Neuroscience exhibit on loan from the National Academy of Science will be available in the Main Hall of the Center.

May 9, 2002 The Medical Heritage Center will sponsor a tea during National Nurses Week to honor nurses' historical contribution to medicine.

Spring 2002 M. Therese Southgate, MD, Senior Contributing Editor of JAMA will present the *Warren Lecture*. Her topic will be based on her work with the art covers for JAMA and her recently released book.

More details will be forthcoming prior to each event.

The history of nursing in Central Ohio spans over 100 years of nursing education, practice and public service. The Medical Heritage Center nursing history project is an effort to collect and preserve this heritage. The tea on May 9<sup>th</sup> will give nurses and friends of nursing the opportunity to learn about the project and the Center's nursing collection. There is no fee for this event and anyone wishing to attend may do so by calling Barbara Van Brimmer at the Medical Heritage Center (614-292-4891).

## Recent Donations

**The Medical Heritage Center thanks those listed for their recent support.**

Louis B. Blair: personal papers ● Mary Ann Burnam: nursing newsletters: *Professionally Speaking*; *Ohio Nurses Review* ● Dr. John C. Burnham: history of medicine texts ● Dr. William Copeland, Sr.: large collection of books and artifacts ● William L. Dean: 1907 dental school class photo and diploma of Horace Dean ● Dr. Nathan S. and Margery Hale: antique invalid feeding cups ● Lester E. Imboden, MD: medical artifacts ● Charles Pavey, MD: large book collection and personal papers ● Jerome M. Rini, MD: photo of parents in OSU Anatomy class 1912 ● Alan E. Sheline, MD: *Surgical Treatment* (Warbasse), 1937 used for artifact identification ● Hugh S. Starr, DVM and Steven E. Starr, MD: large book collection ● Rosa Lee Weinert, RN: nursing texts.

Monetary Donations: Donald F. Bowers, DDS ● Kathi and Jack Faulstich ● Jerry Medaris Hardacre, MD ● Jack R. Parrish, MD ● Drs. George and Ruth Paulson ● Charles Pavey, MD ● Alfred Stockum, MD

For more information about making donations to the Medical Heritage Center, please contact Barbara Van Brimmer 614-292-4891 or [vanbrimmer.2@osu.edu](mailto:vanbrimmer.2@osu.edu)

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Dr. Forman graduated from Starling-Ohio in 1913 and immediately became the surgical pathologist for the old Protestant Hospital (later known as White Cross Hospital and still later as Riverside Methodist Hospital), St. Francis Hospital, and Children's Hospital. In 1917, during World War I, he helped to organize a naval base hospital at the request of the American Red Cross. As a member of that naval unit he was assigned to the operating base at Hampton Roads, Virginia and was the Director of Laboratories until the spring of 1919. At that time he received the Austin Fellow in Physiology at Harvard Medical College under Dr. Walter Cannon. During this fellowship he studied and co-authored several publications relating to his research on the metabolism of the adrenal cortex.

In 1920 he returned to Columbus, Ohio and entered the private practice of medicine in partnership with Dr. Verne Dodd, Professor of Surgery and Dr. E. J. Gordon, Professor of Medicine at the OSU College of Medicine. At the time, The Ohio State University College of Medicine (officially organized in 1914 as a college) was using St. Francis Hospital and The Protestant Hospital as teaching hospitals. Drs. Forman, Dodd and Gordon located their office at 394 East State Street, just a few steps away from St. Francis.

Initially Dr. Forman developed a practice with emphasis on gastrointestinal disturbances and wrote a number of publications relative to his GI investigations. Discussions with Dr. Warren Vaughn, an early pioneer in the United States in the field of allergy, led to Dr. Forman's interest in GI allergy. Developing a practice in food allergy attracted other allergic patients, especially when a Dr. James Phillips lost his eyesight. All of Phillips allergic coryza (rhinitis) and asthma patients transferred to Dr. Forman giving him a large population of allergic patients. He was thus launched into a specialized practice of allergy, which he pursued until his retirement shortly before his death in 1974. He published extensively in this field over some fifty years. Perhaps Forman is best known for writing *The International Letters on Allergy* and compiling a bibliography of the world publications dealing with allergy, which contained over 150,000 references. He also became an associate editor of the College of Allergy's *Annals of Allergy*.

From his interest in food allergy, he began investigating the role of nutrition. His research evolved to studying the relationship of agriculture and the quality of the food that was being produced in this country. This activity brought him into association with national leaders concerned with soil conservation. Because of his natural talent as a speaker, agricultural interests utilized him on national tours. For over a decade he toured the U. S. with Louis Bromfield, world-renowned author and dedicated agricultural conservationist, spreading the word on soil conservation and the production of high quality foods. Dr. Forman became president of "Friends of the Land", a national organization for soil conservation. After the death of Louis Bromfield, his Malabar Farm near Mansfield, Ohio was directed by the "Friends of the Land." Dr. Forman was a trustee, until the farm was deeded to the State of Ohio.

In 1934 Dr. Forman was appointed to the position of Professor of History of Medicine and was retained until 1959. During this time, in collaboration with Iowa D. Smith of the Ohio Archeological and Historical Society, Arthur J. Linn (secretary to

Dean J. H. J. Upham), and Professor Carl Wittke the chairman of the Ohio State Historical Society, Forman published *A Century of Medical Progress - The Ohio State University College of Medicine 1834-1934. Volume I*. Forman also began a regular column in the *Ohio State Medical Journal* called "The Historians Notebook." These articles were brief essays on aspects of Ohio's medical history covering such topics as tuberculosis and Cholera epidemics of the nineteenth century. From his interest in medical history, he and a small group of interested physicians and dentists organized the Ohio Academy of Medical History, which continues to meet annually.

In his later years, Dr. Forman expressed strong opinions on national health issues. For example, during the 1950s Dr. Forman became one of the nation's leaders evaluating the fluoridation of public water supplies in order to prevent dental caries. Though unpopular, he opposed fluoridation because he believed that even in minute amounts, fluorides were toxic for certain individuals. In analyzing some of the early proposals (Wagner-Dingell) for national health insurance, Dr. Forman became an ardent foe and, with his ability to write and speak forcefully and effectively, became a spokesman throughout the U. S. and to committees in Congress.

Dr. Forman with his keen mind and capacity for innovation brought many nuances to the local medical community. In 1928, he and Dr. Ivor Clark organized The Medical Review Club, the first group of Columbus physicians who periodically met to have dinner and discuss some appropriate medical subject in great depth. Today there are four such clubs in the community.

A somewhat anecdotal, but true, story about Dr. Forman concerns his refusal to learn to drive an automobile. As he explained, this refusal allowed him to do things "more important." He had made arrangements with a local taxicab company to pick him up each morning at 6:00 a.m. and also drive him about the city whenever he needed transportation. During his travel time in the cab he would review medical articles or books. He was one of the early speed-readers and could review and critique a new medical textbook in one or two days. Those who utilize the OSU Prior Health Sciences Library may still note that there are literally hundreds of books contributed by Dr. Forman. His methodology was to review a new book and promptly donate it to the library.

Not just the medical community but the entire Columbus community profited immensely from having such a gifted physician and citizen. The great diversity of his interests, his continued search for new knowledge, his staunch commitment to principle, and his zest for life will continue as an inspiration for future generations.

## References

1. *Jonathan Forman, A Biographical Sketch by Helen Marsh. A monograph presented at Dr. Forman's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Sept. 30, 1967.*
2. *Why We Became Doctors by Noah Fabricant M. D. Published by Grune and Stratton, 1954, Chapter 7. An autobiography of Dr. Forman.*
3. *The Columbus Physician, Vol. 58, Mar-Apr. 1992 "Jonathan Forman, M. D., Physician, Citizen, Statesman pg. 38-39 by Paul Metzger.*
4. *The Columbus Academy of Medicine Bulletin, Feb 1936 An Historical Sketch. Pg 8-9.*



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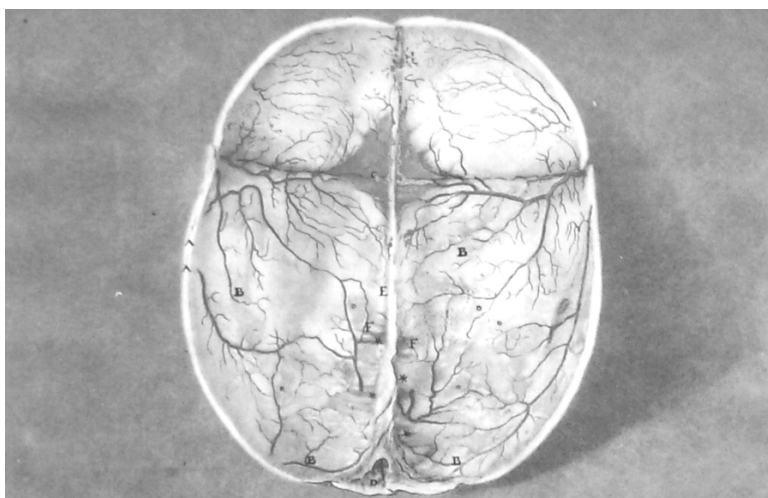
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## Art of Neuroscience: Image and Understanding, 1515-2000

The Medical Heritage Center of the Prior Health Sciences Library is sponsoring a unique exhibit titled *Art of Neuroscience: Image and Understanding, 1518-2000*. This display will be available February 1 – June 1, 2002, from 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday on the fifth floor of the library. The collection of images from the 1500s to the present reveal the advancement of neuroscience through line drawings, often done by unidentified artists, to later images which range from the details of the nerve synapse to what Dr. Marcus Raichle has called “images of the mind” shown in his PET scan. His work demonstrates a visual image of thought. Each piece in the exhibit has a note of explanation, but your own perception will note additional aspects.

The exhibit was made possible by a generous gift to the National Academy of Sciences from Mrs. Arthur M. Sackler in memory of her husband and is on loan to the OSU Medical Heritage Center. For more information contact Barbara Van Brimmer, Medical Heritage Center Curator, (614) 292-4891 or vanbrimmer.2@osu.edu



*Icon Durae Matris in Concava Superficie ... (Image of the Dura Mater, concave surfaces), Amsterdam and Leiden, 1738. By Frederick Ruysch. Illustrated by Johannes (Jan) Ladmiral.*