

# HOUSE CALL



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## A Tireless Determination: Herman A. Hoster, M.D.

By **Walter J. Frajola, Ph.D.**



**Herman A. Hoster, M.D.**

More than five decades ago I received a phone call that started my career in cancer research. After Dr. Herman A. Hoster had identified himself as a professor of medicine at the Ohio State University, he told me he had studied my curriculum vita and wanted me to join his group as a research biochemist. When I informed

him that I had decided to accept a teaching position at a Florida medical school, he was adamant that I first come to OSU to discuss his offer in person. That he was very persuasive was soon evident. I agreed to meet him in his office in Kinsman Hall in three days.

When I arrived at Room 1 Kinsman Hall to ask for directions to Dr. Hoster's office, I was taken down the stairs to the men's room. You cannot imagine my surprise when I was introduced to Dr. Hoster. He was lying on an army cot at the end of which was a table with a phone, some books and paper, and a chair. To separate his *office* from the shower stalls, he had arranged several green metal lockers to form a small room around the cot. He explained that he conducted much of his work on the phone because he had difficulty walking and sitting. Because laboratory space was very scarce, he had converted his assigned office on the first floor of Kinsman Hall into another laboratory work area.

Soon after discussing his research projects I realized that Dr. Hoster had Hodgkin's disease. In 1941, when he had discovered that he had Hodgkin's disease he gave up his residency in medicine at Yale University to return to his home in Columbus. He had graduated from Yale University (B.A., 1934) and Johns Hopkins Univer-

sity (M.D., 1938). To be able to do research on Hodgkin's disease he became an instructor in medicine at OSU. He easily convinced me to join his cause.

During the next two months (July and August 1950) while I finished my studies at the University of Illinois, Dr. Hoster was in constant touch with me by phone describing his research projects and others he wanted to start. Was Hodgkin's disease caused by a virus? Could it be controlled by diet? Could electron microscopy of the Reed-Sternberg cell, which is characteristic of Hodgkin's disease, reveal details that would help understand the nature of the disease? Were any possible chemical therapeutic agents available?

His determination to explore all types of chemotherapy was extraordinary. One day after an evening discussion on the use of mustard gas derivates for the treatment of Hodgkin's patients. Dr. Hoster suggested that other chemical agents capable of sterilizing surgical equipment might have a favorable effect on Hodgkin's patients. He then informed me that he was going to test ethylene epoxide on himself. He had arranged for Fred Shepard, the medical illustrator, to drive him to the Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, Michigan, where a physician with experience in the use of ethylene epoxide would inject him. I was to go with him for a conference with the doctor. Neither the physician nor I could dissuade Dr. Hoster from having the injections. He suffered severe stomach pains and fever and returned to Columbus without any beneficial effect.

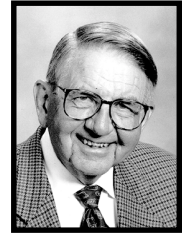
Long before my arrival in Columbus, Drs. Charles A. Doan, Bruce K. Wiseman, Herman A. Hoster and others in the Department of Medicine had established a national reputation in the treatment of blood disorders. In 1949 the Ohio General Assembly granted the Ohio Department of Health \$100,000 for cancer research. Dr. Porterfield, Director of the Ohio Department of Health, made an agreement with the OSU College of Medicine, to develop a Cancer Research Program.

*(continued on page 4)*

# A Glimpse of Medical School During WWII

## “Student Life in Columbus” - Part Two of a Four-Part Series

By Paul Metzger, M.D., OSU Class of 1948



Paul Metzger, MD

Classes during the first year in med school were in Hamilton Hall, and though the external features remain essentially unchanged at the present, the building at that time had no air conditioning, and in the fall and spring the windows were generally open to facilitate cooling and ventilation. Of course, this subjected those in the classrooms, and especially the teaching staff to compete with street noises on Neil Ave. In those days the trolley still existed and most students relied on public transportation to get about town. The trolley system served very well. The trolley ran every fifteen minutes, coming from downtown up the middle of Neil Avenue. and terminating at Neil and Eleventh Avenues. As it reached the end of the line, the conductor lowered the electrical boom on what had been the rear of the car and raised the boom on the other end thus reversing the front and rear of the car. To change the seating to the new front, the conductor went through the car swinging the seats to their new position. All of this activity was completed with a great deal of banging noise. Then, with a clanging of the trolley bell, the car would move down Neil Avenue. The street noises were a challenge to the professors trying to convey important messages for our expanding medical knowledge. When the winter months ensued, the windows closed and their job became easier.

One could catch the trolley on Neil Avenue and, for fifteen cents, go downtown or get a transfer to go just about anywhere in the city. Columbus was a much smaller city then. The city only extended to Oakland Park Avenue on the northeast side and to Morse Road on the north side. The University was the western boundary on the northwest and Upper Arlington and Grandview were relatively small suburbs. Upper Arlington was bounded on the north by Lane Avenue and Riverside Drive on the west. Grandview was between Goodale and Fifth Avenue. From the central part of the city, the “Hilltop” was to the west, and though incorporated into the city, it was almost a separate enclave extending along West Broad Street to the railroad tracks west of Hague Avenue. Bexley was on the east side of the city. The only highrise was the Leveque Tower, which at that time was known as the AIU building (American Insurance Union).

The social life of Columbus in those days centered on downtown, and two venerable old hotels served as the favorite meeting places. These two meeting places were The Neil House, where the Huntington Center is now located, and the Dresher-Wallick, at the northwest corner of Broad and High. The Ohio Theatre and Palace Theatre were the theaters of those days and have fortuitously been saved and restored. Restaurants in those days were few and far between. Downtown had Marzetti’s on Broad Street and the Maramor, also on Broad, as well as the Crystal Room in the old Ft. Hayes Hotel on Spring Street. The Purple Cow, located where the convention center now resides, was a well known local watering hole. Just above Union Station along High Street was the original Jai Lai. Later the Jai Lai relocated to Olentangy River Road just below King Avenue and is now The Buckeye Hall of Fame Cafe.

The medical students of those days had to get to know the city fairly well, as institutions scattered about the city were utilized for teaching purposes. During the second year, after absorbing basic medical information, we began to be exposed to physical diagnosis, which prompted much enthusiasm as we learned to take medical histories and do physical examinations of real patients. It seemed at long last we were on the road to becoming real doctors.

[Continued next issue]



### Mark your Calander!!

Margaret Humphreys, M.D., Ph.D. of Duke University will present *Fever at Wilmington, 1865: An Historical Puzzle* on May 22, 2003 from 4:00 - 6:00 at the Medical Heritage Center. Her presentation considers a peculiar and deadly epidemic in the chaotic city of Wilmington, NC, just as the Civil War was ending. For more information, contact Barbara Van Brimmer at 614-292-4893 or [vanbrimmer.2@osu.edu](mailto:vanbrimmer.2@osu.edu).

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Margaret K. Burns, RN: nursing books • Jerome Dare, MD: fluoroscopic x-ray viewing device • Jerry T. Guy, MD: slides and lantern slides • Richard P. Lewis, MD: Books • Lee Metzger, RN: Two Nursing Uniforms • Mary Sessions, RN: Mt. Sinai Hospital student nursing uniform and Red Cross pins • Charles F. Sinsabaugh, MD: books and medallion of Curtis • Stephen P. Smith, MD: book collection • Ronald Stuckey, Ph.D.: books and research files • Shirley Bogart Tarbil, RN: OSU nursing uniform, nursing pins, and other nursing ephemera • Charles Wooley, MD: "Four Doctors" • Jo Yeoh: Kissane cardiology books

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## MHC Participates in Ohio's Bicentennial



2003 marks Ohio's bicentennial and the Medical Heritage Center is doing its part to help highlight the state's medical history.

The Medical Heritage Center is featured along with other members of the Ohio Medical History Consortium in a brochure that encourages people to explore 200 years of Ohio's medical heritage by visiting various institutions throughout Ohio. The brochure will be available at Ohio travel information stops along the state's highways.

A photograph from the MHC's nursing collection is featured in the Friends of the OSU Libraries' Special Collections Bicentennial Calendar. For more information call The Friends' office at (614) 292-3387.

The Medical Heritage Center has also been accepted to participate in the *Ohio Memory* Project, an on-line scrapbook of Ohio history. The Center's submissions include medical artifacts, nursing textiles, a catalogue from Starling Medical College, and selections from the William G. Myers and Robert M. Zollinger Collections. Visit the Ohio Memory web site at: [www.ohiomemory.org](http://www.ohiomemory.org) to view MHC's contributions appearing in March!

## 2002: A Busy Year for MHC Scholars

Last year proved to be a busy year for the MHC History Scholars in Residence, George Paulson, MD and Charles Wooley, MD.



Dr. Paulson

In addition to serving on several boards and committees, Paulson published four articles in *Timeline* and also had articles published in *Lloydiana*, *Ohioana Quarterly*, *Pediatric Seminars* and *Medical Hypotheses*. He gave several lectures throughout the country and also organized and served as an instructor of an OSU course on the University's history. Paulson is currently the sub-editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Midwest: Science, Technology, and Medicine* and is working on a biography of William Thorton, MD. Paulson's *The Ohio State University's College of Medicine, Vol. III* is available for purchase at the Medical Heritage Center. Contact Barbara Van Brimmer (614) 292-9273 or [vanbrimmer.2@osu.edu](mailto:vanbrimmer.2@osu.edu) for purchasing information.



Dr. Wooley

Wooley published, *The Irritable Heart of Soldiers and the Origins of Anglo-American Cardiology: The U.S. Civil War (1861) to World War I (1918)*. The book analyzes the "irritable heart" of soldiers and the changing medical and social response to the disease. The condition, later known as neuro-circulatory asthenia, was first named during the US Civil War and was characterized by chest pains, palpitations, breathlessness, fatigue, syncope, and exercise intolerance and incapacitated many thousands of otherwise healthy troops. The work provides a unique perspective on one of the pioneering areas of Anglo-American cardiology and can be purchased by contacting the Ashgate Publishing Co. at (800) 535-9544 or e-mail [orders@ashgate.com](mailto:orders@ashgate.com). Wooley gave a presentation at the American Osler Society Annual Meeting and was invited to provide the 21<sup>st</sup> annual James V. Warren Lecture-ship at OSU. Wooley is currently working on a series of historical portraits of notable Central Ohioans in medicine and on a history of Central Ohio medicine with MHC Curator, Barbara Van Brimmer.

## Herman Hoster (continued from page one)

The Research Advisory Committee, several University experts with Dr. Hoster as chairman, solicited cancer research projects, evaluated the proposals, and granted funding for seven projects. Scientists funded included: W. G. Myers, E. von Haam, H. Schlumberger, J. L. Morton, G. A. Ackerman, G. J. Hamwi, M. T. Macklin, and B. A. Bouroncle. An additional \$80,000 was appropriated for 1952–1953. The research results described in The Ohio Department of Health Report “Cancer Research 1953” included among others: the treatment of cancer of the cervix with radio-active cobalt by Allan Barnes, M.D.; a report of nutritional studies of diets devoid of all proteins by W. J. Frajola, Ph.D.; and radio-active gold for the treatment of cancer by William G. Myers, M.D.

In 1950 Dr. Hoster realized that the new Health Center Hospital then under construction would not have sufficient facilities for cancer research. He began working toward obtaining funding for a Cancer Research Laboratory from the federal government and the Ohio General Assembly. He persuaded the U.S. Public Health

Service Advisory Cancer Council to make a challenge grant of \$300,000 available, if matching funds were raised, but that total was short by \$57,000 when the Ohio State University Board of Trustees met to consider the project. Fortunately, Charles Kettering, vice-president of the OSU Board of Trustees the Head of the Kettering Foundation, wrote a check for the shortfall and allowed construction of the Cancer Research Laboratories to begin.

Unfortunately, Dr. Hoster did not live to see his dream come true. He died of Hodgkin’s disease on May 15, 1951, at age 39, ten months before construction of the laboratories began. Dedication ceremonies for the Cancer Research Laboratories were held May 8 and 9, 1953.

Dr. Hoster’s legacy involves much more than his many publications on Hodgkin’s disease. It includes the many patients (perhaps thousands) who benefited from the new therapeutic agents used by the OSU doctors; the many medical students who were able to do research in the new laboratories; and several laboratory technologists who went on to advanced degrees and careers in medicine and medical research.



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