BETHESDA HISTORY LINKED TO HEALTH

A few hundred yards to the north of the NIH reservation stands the old church from which Bethesda got its name. The original stone structure built in 1820 was named the Bethesda Presbyterian Church. The name was chosen from the Biblical passage in the 5th Chapter of St. John describing the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda.

The word Bethesda is derived from two Hebrew words -- "beth" meaning house, and "tsedar" meaning yoke. As the yoke bent the heads of oxen, the idea was derived that a person with bowed head signified humility, and later, kindness and mercy. From this idea, Bethesda literally came to mean house of mercy.

For centuries people have gone to famous spas or watering places seeking healing and rejuvenation. It is an amazing coincidence that two great medical centers were located here in Bethesda. Thousands of people throughout the country have come to the Naval Medical Center and will come in the future to NIH's Clinical Center.

The church, located near NIH, is of great historical interest to the suburban area. It was built by the Presbyterians led by Captain John, who gave his name to the community of Cabin John, Md. In 1850 the original church burned and stone from it was used in the foundation of the building which today commands the hillside overlooking Rockville Pike.

It is the only church still standing in the country which President Abraham Lincoln attended. Frequently he drove his horse on the nine-mile trip from the White House to attend services there. This trip is estimated to have taken a little more than two hours.

NEW LEAVE POLICY IN EFFECT

Many NIH employees have been asking questions about the new annual leave policy. The policy is similar to the one in effect during 1950.

Simply stated, it provides that all leave earned during this calendar year must be taken by June 30, 1953, or forfeited. The same system will continue in future years.

You do not have to take leave that you had on hand January 1, 1952. Whatever you had on this date may be carried from year to year as accumulated leave.

There is one exception to the policy. Employees with wartime leave accumulations of 60 days or more must take their 1952 leave by December 20 of this year.

Your leave clerk will keep you informed of how you stand so that you do not lose any of your annual leave.
Dr. Frank makes adjustment on the microelectrode positioner.

The mechanism of inhibition is perhaps second in importance to that of excitation for a basic understanding of the operation of the nervous system. The site of inhibition in the spinal cord is an important and as yet unsettled question.

Studies on the mechanism of inhibition in the spinal cord, begun at the University of Chicago, are being continued at NIMH by Dr. Karl Frank of the Section on the Spinal Cord.

Earlier studies have shown that at least part of the inhibition of a reflex elicitable from decapitate spinal cord preparation may occur presynaptically. At present the Section is attempting to obtain evidence that will bear directly on this point. It is hoped that the site of inhibition can be fixed with more certainty for normal and inhibited reflex arcs by recording the action spike potentials and pre-spike potentials from single motor horn cells of the spinal cord.

Preliminary work during this period has included construction of a power supply, two stimulators, two double-beam oscillographs, and a preamplifier for wide-frequency range and high impedance recording of bioelectric potentials.

A needle puller has been designed and constructed for making microelectrode pipettes of smaller than 1 micron tip diameter. Determinations have been made of the electrical properties of various types of microelectrodes.

Preliminary runs on actual spinal cord preparations indicate that this technique is feasible for recording from single cells. Thus far, recordings have been made from interneurones only and not yet from motorneurones.

The possibility has been raised of recording electrical activity outside the cell in which the micro-electrode is placed, but the degree of such interference must be elucidated before cell pre-spike potentials can be properly assessed. In an attempt to eliminate this possible source of uncertainty, a double micro-electrode has been constructed for the direct measurement of the potential difference across a single cell membrane.

TV Series

A weekly series of 10 films dealing with FSA programs and services began July 6. The programs can be seen on Sundays on Channel 7 from 7:30 to 8:00 p.m.

The FSA series, "Everybody's Business," will include films dealing with such diverse subjects as mental health, child development, fluoridation of water, diabetes control, vocational rehabilitation, and social security.

PHS Directory

The Public Health Service recently issued a "PHS Directory of External Affiliations." This list details the offices held by key PHS personnel in national and international scientific and professional organizations. The scope of the Directory, intended for administrative use by PHS officials, is limited to affiliations with organizations outside FSA whose activities are related to the work of the Service. Copies are available from the PHS Distribution Section, Code 176, Ext. 71406.

Retirement

On June 30, Philip M. Gillis retired from NMI after more than 23 years' service as janitor at the Rocky Mountain Laboratory. Prior to his employment there, he spent two hitches in the Army—with the Coast Artillery from 1907-10, and later with the Field Artillery from 1917-19.

Honors

Dr. Paul A. Neal, Chief of NIAID's Laboratory of Physical Biology, was reappointed for a three-year term as a member of the Correspondence Committee on Occupational Safety and Health. The Governing Body of the International Labour Office announced the appointment at Geneva, Switzerland.

Reminder

During the hot summertime, many cars are observed in the parking lots with leaking gas tanks. If your car has a full tank and you must park on a sloping surface, remember to park with the gas tank on the high side of the slope.
NIH GUARDS Cont’d

but the guards survey the entire reservation at least three times in the patrol cars and emergency truck. To the guards fall the tasks of seeing that all outbuildings and shops are secured, and turning off all roadway and outbuilding lights. At least three times nightly, the guards go through all the buildings, with the exception of Bldg. 7 and those still under construction.

Frequently during their rounds, the guards will find notes from some of the scientists asking them to take care of an experiment. They have been assisting with a single project for over seven years.

The guards log in all visitors to any of the buildings. At nights, on week ends and holidays, they receive incoming mail and telegrams which come in on the teleprinter machine in the mailroom. They also operate the monitor switchboard for incoming calls.

In case of an emergency, such as power or water failure, the guards notify the administrative officers of the Institutes or scientists whose experiments may be endangered by emergency conditions.

All members of the guard force are trained fire fighters and stand ready at all times to assist the Fire Marshal. Recently they were trained to use the equipment on the emergency truck. All guards are qualified to administer first aid.

To the guards fall the task of maintaining five file cabinets full of keys for the buildings, rooms, lockers, etc., throughout NIH. They just received one gross of blank keys for the Clinical Center, which they will have to add to their file in the future.

NIH’s animal colony presents some unusual situations for our guards to cope with. One night a cat led the guards a merry chase through the second floor of Bldg. 8 before he was shooed back into his cage. Even the caged animals can harass a guard on the night shift. "Pee Wee," the chimpanzee, took a key ring from the hand of one of the guards who was making the rounds in the animal building. All efforts to coax Pee Wee to yield the keys failed until he was bribed with a plump banana.

SAFETY TIPS

A few weeks ago, an elevator cab stopped between floors. Upon hearing the trouble alarm bell, a passerby unlocked the shaft doorway and directed the rescue of the two elevator occupants through the cab hatchway and out through the shaft door opening. This could have been fatal.

Upon hearing the elevator bell, building occupants should first assure the prisoners of forthcoming aid and then notify the Electric Shop, explaining the exact nature of the difficulty.

Incidentally, the Bldg. 1 elevator door is still catching arms and legs as people try to get in at the last minute. The person operating the elevator should be ready to push the "Door Open" button if necessary.

In one of the laboratories the other day, a technician burned her mouth when she pipetted potassium permanganate. Always use a mechanical device when handling corrosive, radioactive, toxic, or highly infectious liquids.

A laboratory aide recently received a stunning shock when he disengaged a power plug from a receptacle located near a dripping water spigot. Always switch off electrical equipment before pulling out the plug.

Concentrated nitric acid sprayed into a technician’s face as he attempted to remove a plaster top from a warm bottle. Always cool bottles before opening them, wear a face shield, and direct opening away from your face.

GERM-FREE BIRDS ARE SUBJECT OF LECTURE

The effect of antibiotics on germ-free birds was discussed by Drs. James A. Reyniers and Thomas Luckey of the LOBUND Institute, University of Notre Dame. They spoke in Wilson Hall on July 10 in a program sponsored by NIAID.

Dr. Floyd S. Daft, in introducing the speakers, described the sterile room in which the germ-free animals are raised. Before entering this room, investigators must put on diving suits and remain for several minutes in a small tank of formaldehyde.

Dr. Reyniers described the germ-free animal technique. He emphasized that the number of microorganisms in ordinary or "conventional" animals is astronomical. In the LOBUND colony, however, this figure is zero.

Germ-free animals grow larger than conventional animals. Antibiotics have no appreciable effect on their growth rate, though in conventional animals, they promote growth.
LATE SHUTTLE BUS FROM NIH TO FSA

A late shuttle bus has been running for some months from NIH to the FSA Building, stopping at various downtown hotels and Union Station. This shuttle was started for a dual purpose, to provide visitors with transportation downtown upon completion of their visit at NIH, and for persons in travel status leaving directly from the Institutes at the close of business en route to Union Station.

The station wagon leaves Building I at 4:50 and T-6 at 4:55 p.m. FSA is the last stop. All requests for reservations for this trip should be made by 4 p.m. if possible, through the Administrative Officers of the Institutes or Branches, to the Motor Dispatcher.

This service is also available for visitors coming out to NIH in the morning. The station wagon leaves FSA at 8 a.m. and arrives at NIH at 8:30 a.m. Reservations for this shuttle should be made the day before the visitor wishes to come to NIH through the same channel as the afternoon shuttle.

This late shuttle service will be continued through the summer for the convenience of visitors, and at the end of that time, the possibility of its continuance will be considered.

DR. PINCUS TO PRODUCE RADIOACTIVE HORMONE

Radioactive hydrocortisone for use in arthritis research will be manufactured at the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology with the aid of a $19,800 grant from NIAMD.

Dr. Gregory Pincus, Director of Laboratories, will produce the radio-hydrocortisone by a method known as "perfusion."

A radioactive sex hormone, progesterone, will be passed through numerous beef adrenal glands. This will change it into radio-hydrocortisone, the radioactive form of a major adrenal hormone in humans and other mammals. By means of its radioactivity, the new product can be traced through the bodies of animals in an effort to learn how the adrenal hormones produce their effects.

NIH Spotlight

Ernie Davis

Most little boys at one time or another solemnly vow to become firemen when they grow up. One who carried out this vow is Ernie Davis, NIH Fire Marshal.

Ernie started his career as a mascot for a volunteer fire company in Hyattsville, Md. He spent a good deal of time at the firehouse, longing for the day when he would be old enough to be a real fireman. When his 10th birthday rolled around, Ernie was eligible to join the ranks of fire fighters. From then on his course was charted.

In 1934, he was appointed chief of the Hyattsville Fire Department. He attended numerous fire-fighter training schools and taught fire fighting at the "Fireman's Short Course" at the University of Maryland. He also instructed other fire companies in Prince Georges County.

In 1944, Ernie joined the Army. He wasn't an infantryman for long because he was soon placed in charge of a fire company for the 13th Air Force in the Philippines.

When Ernie came out of the Army, he took a job as a salesman of fire fighting equipment. Ernie enjoyed this work, but it kept him on the road too much. He decided to find a job that would allow him more time at home. In 1949, Ernie came to NIH on the advice of his aunt, who worked for PHS.

As Fire Marshal he is responsible for fire protection, prevention, and training. He is also in charge of the disposal of inflammable material from the laboratories.

Each day Ernie checks the equipment on the NIH fire truck to see that everything is in proper working order. Ernie and a specially trained fire brigade operate the truck in case of emergency or fire.

NIH is remarkably free from fires. Ernie feels it is due to fire prevention awareness of NIH people. All new employees attend special classes in fire prevention and fire-fighting techniques given by Ernie and Jim Black, the Safety Officer.

Another job for Ernie is that of surveying the new buildings on the campus to determine the number of fire extinguishers needed in each one. Incidentally, it takes about 2 1/2 months each year to check all existing fire extinguishers at NIH to see they are operating properly.

Ernie is married and lives in Washington Grove, Md. In his spare time he helps his father-in-law with his 50-acre farm. Ernie has a five-year-old son who wants to be--well, naturally--a fireman when he grows up.

NIH ANNOUNCES TWO NEW ASSIGNMENTS

Dr. Mabel Ross was assigned recently to the PHS Regional Office in New York as Mental Health Consultant in Psychiatry for Regions 1 and 2.

From 1948-51 Dr. Ross was Director of the Prince Georges County mental health clinic, which is sponsored jointly by the Prince Georges County Health Department, Maryland State Department of Health, and NIMH. Prior to her new assignment, Dr. Ross spent a year in training at the Harvard School of Public Health.

Dr. Ross replaces Dr. Robert Dysinger who has held the Regional post since 1949. He is now assigned to NIMH's Intramural Research Branch and will conduct field investigations in mental health at the Prince Georges County clinic until the opening of the Clinical Center.

NIH Record

Vol. IV, No. 14 - July 21, 1952

NIH RECORD published by Scientific Reports Branch, National Institutes of Health -- Oliver 1400, Ext. 2171