

LETTERS



The Global Reach of Michigan Medicine

I enjoyed the articles in the most recent issue of *Medicine at Michigan*, and was particularly interested in the article on Global REACH by Jeff Mortimer. I have been doing humanitarian work as a Michigan post-grad in Ukraine since 1992. We have engaged ophthalmology residents as well as faculty from various universities. (Dr. Del Monte from the Pediatric Ophthalmology Division at the Kellogg Eye Center has gone with us on three occasions.) These were transformative experiences for the ophthalmology residents, as they provided an opportunity to consult, teach and perform surgery — we have done almost 500 major eye cases since 1992. We also have brought patients to America whose surgeries were too complex to be performed in Ukraine. We have translated an emergency eye book and furnished copies to universities in Ukraine, and supported physicians we brought here for training. We are pleased to report that, in June 2006, Lesia Buryak, a student we have supported for the past six years, will receive her diploma as a medical doctor from the Academy of Medicine in Ivano-Frankivsk. We are currently putting

together a team of physicians and O.R. support personnel for the 2006 mission, which we hope to coordinate with her graduation date.

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Intercontinental Collaboration

I read the story in the most recent issue of *Medicine at Michigan* regarding the Global REACH program at the Medical School and would like to bring to readers' attention the Department of Psychiatry's International Collaborative Substance Abuse Research Training Program. The program is funded by the National Institute of Health's Fogarty International Center in conjunction with the National Institute on Drug Abuse and involves a collaboration with the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology in Warsaw. It is run by faculty in the Substance Abuse Section of our department (and has also involved participation from colleagues from Human Genetics, the Michigan Behavioral Neuroscience Institute, and the School of Public Health). Through this program,



William Selezinka in the pediatric ophthalmology ward of the hospital in Ivano-Frankivsk in 1996

Polish psychiatrists and behavioral scientists are trained at Michigan. We also run an annual workshop in Poland for physicians and behavioral scientists (from Poland, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and this year also Ukraine) who are doing research on substance abuse. The workshop program has allowed us to establish longer-term collaborations with a larger group of Polish colleagues, and may involve scientific relationships with other colleagues in Eastern Europe as the program matures. Polish fellows have not only been mentored by U-M Psychiatry faculty, but also by faculty from the departments of Pharmacology, Statistics, and Health Behavior and Health Education.

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The Passing of a Giant

With the recent death of Horace Davenport, Ph.D., who was the William Beaumont Emeritus Professor of Physiology and for 22 years the chair of

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the Department of Physiology, the University of Michigan and the fields of biomedical research, medicine and medical history have lost a leader whose strides in research and teaching left us all better off than we were before his influence was felt in the world.

At a height of six-feet-six-inches, Horace Davenport was, literally, a giant of the University and the Medical School — mentally as well as physically. A dedicated and tenacious researcher, he was an internationally renowned gastric physiologist as well as a respected medical historian. As an academic administrator, he rebuilt the U-M Department of Physiology into one of the premier physiology programs in the world. As a scholar, his assiduous and almost surgically meticulous quest for knowledge was unparalleled. But it was perhaps Professor Davenport’s role as teacher and mentor that, for the hundreds of students he helped train throughout his career (including me), will remain our foremost and fondest memory of this remarkable man.

The day I first called upon Dr. Davenport — as a first-year medical student and at the suggestion of Professor Arthur Vander in whose renal physiology lab I worked — ultimately resulted in the most seminal relationship of my academic career. I hasten to add that the claim is hardly mine alone; there are legions of physiologists, surgeons, physicians and historians who benefited from Horace’s erudition and scholarship over the last seven decades.

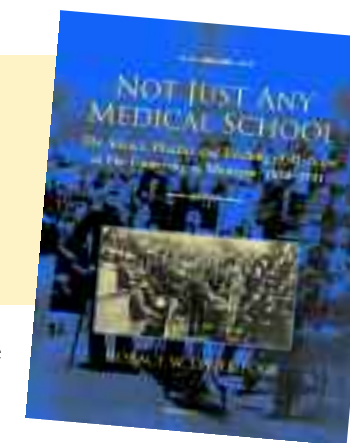
On that day, I had interrupted Professor Davenport as he was reviewing the clinical notes of George Dock, who served as chair and professor of medicine at Michigan from 1891 to 1908. One of William Osler’s prized students at the University of Pennsylvania, Dock left behind 16 volumes of clinical notes. Dr. Davenport handed me the transcript for a poorly attended clinic of May 12, 1905, that began with Dock’s opening line to his students that afternoon: “We

can pick out those who are neither lovers of music or baseball.”

“What do you think this means?” Dr. Davenport asked me. Fate was smiling on me that day. As an undergraduate, I’d long volunteered as an usher for the University Musical Society and correctly guessed that Dock must have been alluding to the May Festival — an annual series of grand orchestral concerts held in Ann Arbor from 1891 until 1994. Davenport smiled and exclaimed “That’s right!”

“What about the baseball lovers? What do you make of that?” he wanted to know. There is an old adage that in medical school it is far more important to look like you know what you are doing than to actually know what you are doing. So in my most confident tone and posture, I boldly but wildly speculated: “Michigan must have been playing baseball that afternoon.” More than mildly impressed — not an easy thing to do to Dr. Davenport — he again enthusiastically rejoined, “Absolutely right. In fact, Michigan played Wisconsin that afternoon and won four to three.”

Thus began a mentoring relationship that has spanned my entire career. When he learned that I planned to become a pediat-



trician, Dr. Davenport swiftly assigned me to research the life and work of David Murray Cowie, Michigan’s first professor of pediatrics. I knew little about conducting historical research at the time, but I recall fondly Dr. Davenport taking me to the Taubman Medical Library and, by campus bus, to the Bentley Historical Library, where he patiently introduced me to the

task at hand. Each week, we would spend several hours discussing what I had found as well as his own prodigious research efforts. These lessons never left my consciousness and to this day, when confronted with a difficult scholarly or ethical quandary, I find myself asking, how would Horace handle this problem?

Throughout his book *Not Just Any Medical School*, which chronicles the U-M Medical School’s history from 1850 through 1941, Davenport reminds us all that it was not through bricks and mortar that the Michigan Medical School achieved its stature and heritage of excellence but, instead, through its most important resource — talented and dedicated individuals. Today, there is one fewer of that fold, an absence that will remain palpable to many of us for a very long while.

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