



GEORGE T. PACK, M.D.

1898-1969

A TRIBUTE

"The editors paradoxically hope that these volumes may soon become obsolete with the discovery of more efficient means of curing cancer, such as a chemotherapeutic remedy or, better yet, by the creation of an immunity against the disease. In the meantime, these manuals of present-day therapy are offered with the wish that the best treatment plan now

available can be instituted for any patient bearing any form of cancer."

GEORGE T. PACK, M.D.
Foreword to the series
"Treatment of Cancer and
Allied Diseases," New York,
Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 1958.

THE above quotation emphasizes the over-all philosophy of this brilliant and courageous man. While utilizing his superb knowledge of cancer to treat any patient bearing any form of the disease, and working indefatigably to improve present-day methods, he constantly sought to discover and apply newer methods of treatment for cure or for palliation.

Having personally known Dr. Pack for 33 years and having worked with him for over 10 years in the preparation of the Second Edition of the series "Treatment of Cancer and Allied Diseases" and the volumes "Tumors of the Soft Somatic Tissues" and "Cancer and Allied Diseases of Infancy and Childhood," I was privileged to know this versatile man rather well. I never ceased to wonder at the magnitude of his knowledge, his indefatigable energy, and his unslaked curiosity. Of that boundless energy one of his students once remarked: "Dr. Pack is like the proverbial Irishman who is never at peace unless in the midst of a battle, and George Pack is never at rest unless he is over his ears in work." The medical profession in particular and humanity in general lost a great and dedicated man on January 23, 1969 when Dr. George T. Pack died from extensive vascular sclerosis.

Dr. Pack was born in Antrim, Ohio on May 14, 1898. His entrance into medicine was pure serendipity. As a graduate student at Ohio State University, he delivered a lecture which was heard by the late Dr. Winternitz of Yale University, and Dr. Winternitz invited him to continue his lecturing in the Department of Pathology in the belief that he had an M.D. degree. After arrival at Yale, and when it was discovered that George Pack was not even a medical student, he continued with his lectures and became a student at Yale University, graduating *cum laude* with a medical degree in 1922. At a later date, he established one of the first tumor clinics at Yale University. At the age of 25 years, he went to the University of Alabama School of Medicine as Professor of Pathology and

Associate Dean. Because of his desire to be a "doctor of patients," he came to New York as an intern at Memorial Cancer Center in 1926. After a period of training at the Curie Foundation Institute of Radium in Paris, he returned to Memorial Hospital, under a Rockefeller fellowship, as Resident Surgeon (1928-1931).

Dr. James Ewing recognized the capabilities of this young man and he was appointed Chief of the Gastric Service at Memorial Hospital, but without privileges to operate unless under the supervision of a senior surgeon. Dr. Pack enjoyed relating one of the first exploratory laparotomies performed under this arrangement, for gastric cancer, and the senior surgeon declared the cancer inoperable. Several months later, the senior surgeon went on vacation and Dr. Pack recalled the patient to Memorial Hospital, performed a subtotal gastrectomy, and the patient remained well for 10 years or longer. What would have happened to George Pack's career had that patient expired? This story testifies to the courage of Dr. Pack's convictions in everything he undertook. He developed the Gastric and Mixed Tumor Services, of which he was the Chief, into a true oncologic service in which every method of therapy was utilized, based upon the natural history of each type of cancer. A recent book on gastric cancer by McNeer and Pack, "Neoplasms of the Stomach," attests to the tremendous experience in this field which these men had.

Dr. Pack was trained mostly in radiotherapy and practiced this phase of cancer therapy extensively in his early years. He was the first to use the Chaoul low-voltage radiation unit for treating bladder cancer, and he introduced Van de Graaff to the medical profession when supervoltage irradiation was only an idea of Van de Graaff's. As the years went by, he gradually became more and more obsessed with surgery and, for the most part, relinquished the technical aspects of radiation therapy to physicians trained in this highly technical specialty; but he always maintained a

strong interest in the indications and contraindications for irradiation and remained a great student of radiation biology.

In the present writer's opinion, Dr. Pack was the greatest clinician to operate at Memorial Cancer Center, and physicians from all parts of the world came to Memorial Hospital to watch him operate and to study his methods of treating cancer. He knew cancer as did few physicians of his day, and he was a true oncologist in that he carefully synchronized surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy for the maximum benefit for a given patient.

With the rapid expansion of Memorial Cancer Center in New York and the resultant limitation of responsibility of the clinician, Dr. Pack formed his own group (The Pack Medical Group, and The Pack Medical Foundation) to permit him the proper vehicles to continue his clinical investigations, pursue his ideas of cancer education, and permit his treating the entire patient, utilizing all the modalities. The records of 81,000 patients, most with cancer, treated at the Pack Medical Group, the large number of scientific papers and books emanating from the Pack Medical Foundation, the 45 Fellows trained in oncology at the Foundation, and the 33 physicians, either alumni or currently associated with the Pack Medical Group and Foundation attest to the wisdom of his decision and the great success of his undertaking.

It would require many pages to enumerate the honors and awards and the honorary professorships conferred on Dr. Pack. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa Society of Ohio State University and Sigma Xi of Yale University. At the time of his demise, he was on the staffs of 10 hospitals in New York City and Visiting or Consulting Surgeon to 25 hospitals outside New York City. He had honorary degrees and professorships from 15 universities; decorations and awards from 21 countries or universities; was a member or honorary member in 90 medical societies; and was on the editorial board of seven national or inter-

national medical journals. He was Vice President for the International Union Against Cancer, an Honorary Life Director of the American Cancer Society and a Special Consultant to the National Cancer Institute. In 1967 he received the Special Citation Award of the American Cancer Society.

Dr. Pack was a well-rounded individual who loved all aspects of life and had many interests and loves. He had profound love for his family and his home. He loved athletics and often attended the international tennis competitions and various track meets. I recall his annoyance one day, while waiting for an operative schedule to start, because he had tickets for the National Track Meet. The operation finally commenced and it became necessary to perform a long, tedious right hepatic lobectomy. Once engrossed in the surgical procedure, all else was forgotten, time ceased to exist; he loved surgery.

Dr. Pack was born and spent his youth on a farm, which stimulated his love of breeding cattle. As a youth, he delivered milk and throughout his life he was interested in cattle. In his earlier years he had a small farm in New Jersey and later he acquired a large conglomerate of 20 farms in York County, Pennsylvania on which he raised one of the finest herds of Guernsey cattle in the country. He took great pride in contributing to a veterinary journal and writing his own advertisements regarding his prize-winning herd at "Lauxmont Farms." So great was his administrative ability that despite the fact that he could seldom get to the farm because of his overwhelming professional duties, he successfully administered his large complex.

Even as a farmer, he never lost sight of his research activities. He experimented with twinning of cattle, and he was constantly interested in the various forms of cancer from which animals suffer. A prize baby bull was given to him because the bull had a cancer of the jaw. Without hesitation, he had the bull moved to the operating room of the Pack Medical Group in order to

remove this tumor. The anesthetist, unfamiliar with anesthesia of animals, gave an agent which resulted in the death of the bull. The problem then presented itself of how to remove this dead baby bull inconspicuously from an institution devoted to the treatment of human patients.

Dr. Pack's zest for operating never left him. Handicapped by severe illness in the last year, he would go to the operating table with an assistant or associate so that he could stand by the operation even though he could not operate himself. He felt that his presence would permit the proper judgment for a given form of cancer.

Dr. Pack loved poetry and one of his favorite lines of poetry was this from Dylan Thomas:

"Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close
day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

George Pack fought death valiantly. He is survived by his beloved family—his widow, Helen; three sons, Dr. George T.,

Jr., Christopher and Jonathan; three daughters, Tacy Dorothea Pack, Helen Clytie Pack and Mrs. George Mechir; and five grandchildren—and he is survived by a generation of physicians he helped to train; by those physicians of the Pack Medical Group and Foundation who worked closely with him daily over the years.

At the close of the funeral service for Dr. Pack in Englewood, New Jersey, Rev. Harry E. Chase thus epitomized the attributes of this truly remarkable man and master oncologist:

"Let us be thankful for a life lived to the hilt. Let us be thankful for a man who loved life and lived it to the end; for a man who loved truth and sought to know it; for a man who loved his family and wanted them to know it; for a man who loved God and was glad to be an artisan in the workshop of God."

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