

Newell Willard Philpott was born in Hamilton, Ontario, and died in Montreal, Quebec, on December 30, 1999. He was 97 years old. Newlie Philpott was an outstanding athlete. He played intercollegiate football for McGill University for 6 years and was captain of the team the year he graduated, 1926. At the end of the year, his fellow students said of him, "What a student, what a player, what a man, just as much at home in the hospital as he is on the gridiron." Those were the days when true amateurs dominated sports. This was only a few years after a team from the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association had won the Stanley Cup. Dr. Philpott also distinguished himself in basketball, baseball, and tennis, and was vice president of the student body in 1926.

Newell Philpott took his post-graduate training at McGill, the University of Michigan (Pathology), Edinburgh, Kiel, and Berlin. He joined the staff of the Royal Victoria Hospital and McGill University in 1930 as an assistant demonstrator in obstetrics and gynecology. As a junior staffperson, he published widely in renowned journals such as the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and *Annals of Internal Medicine* on endocarditis, obstetrical morbidity, and congenital defects in newborns.

Dr. Philpott joined the navy in 1941 as surgeon lieutenant-commander but was recalled to take charge of the maternity pavilion at the Royal Victoria Hospital in 1943. He became professor and head of obstetrics and gynecology in 1946.

He was an optimistic problem solver, pragmatic, and effective as a clinician and planner. He organized a hematology unit devoted to the study and treatment of erythroblastosis fetalis and the anemias of pregnancy. During his tenure, the infant mortality rate decreased from 0.33% to 0.03%, and the maternal morbidity rate (postpartum fever) decreased from 19.7% to 6.4%. These results attracted many distinguished visitors to the clinic. Harry Oxorn, an admiring student, resident, colleague, and friend of Newell Philpott described Dr. Philpott as one of McGill's most illustrious graduates. "Not only was Newlie an outstanding teacher, but he was a born leader and organizer, with an overpowering personality, who had the reputation of getting things done. He possessed enormous charisma, a magnetism that drew people to him and made them want to follow his lead and to listen attentively to what he had to say. And he always had a lot to say." Dr. Philpott was the first full-time appointee at McGill in obstetrics and gynecology, an arrangement he requested to devote time to teaching and research, with an implied limit on private practice. During his tenure, the department was ranked among the world's best for efficiency, safety, and progress.

Obstetrics and gynecology became a single department at McGill University in 1912, and Walter W. Chipman was the first head of the department. He represented the ideal pattern of training, practice, and acceptance in the community that attracted Dr. Franklin Martin, founder of the American College of Surgeons. The example of Dr. Chipman was an important reason that Canadians were included as equal partners in the formation of that College. Newell Philpott followed in Dr. Chipman's footsteps. He was the third president of the American College of Surgeons from the staff of the Royal Victoria Hospital; he served from 1958 to 1959. Dr. Philpott emphasized in his presidential address that "a fellowship is a companionship of colleagues drawn together, bound together, and sharing together a love and admiration of their life's work."

Newell Philpott received many honors. He was elected president of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada in 1950 and was appointed Fellow, Royal Society of Medicine, London, England in 1958. He received the Honorary M.D. from Laval University in 1952. He was vice president (surgery) of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in 1953, and received an honorary fellowship, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in 1959.

After serving for more than 10 years as the head of obstetrics and gynecology at McGill, Newlie Philpott returned to full-time practice in 1956, was named emeritus professor in 1957, and retired in 1969.

A few months before his 92nd birthday, Dr. Newell Philpott (or "Newlie" as we fondly called him) remarked to me, "It is a strange coincidence. My father died when he was 92 years old, and my mother died at the same age. Soon I shall reach that milestone." I shook his hand and said, "Well, Dr. Philpott, in that case I guess that I shan't be seeing you anymore." He laughed and declared his intention not to let me off the hook just yet. True to his word, he held on for another five years until his death on December 30, 1999, at the age of 97 years.

Newell Willard Philpott was born one of twelve children in Hamilton, Ontario, on September 27, 1902. Philpott enrolled at McGill in 1919. He played football for McGill for six years, captaining the team for the 1925 season, prior to graduating with his M.D. in 1926. Following an internship at Montreal General Hospital, Philpott studied pathology at the University of Michigan before returning to Montreal's three-year residency programme in obstetrics and gynaecology. He then spent a year studying endocrinology at the University of Kiel in Germany before taking up a teaching appointment at McGill and a staff position at Royal Victoria Hospital in 1932. During World War II, Philpott enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy. When he retired from the Navy in 1944 after three years of service, he held the rank of Surgeon Lieutenant Commander and was head of the naval hospital in Halifax.

In 1945, Philpott replaced Dr. John Fraser as Professor and Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at McGill, and was simultaneously named Obstetrician-Gynaecologist in Chief at Royal Victoria Hospital. After filling these positions with distinction for eleven years, he resigned in 1956 to enter private practice, feeling that no term as Chairman should last more than eleven years.

His political instincts were sharp. When the introduction of hospital insurance was greeted warily by a large segment of the medical profession, he reminded us that the government taking over the doctors, along with everything else in medicine, would not be too far behind. Yet Philpott never lost sight of the fact that, whatever happened, we doctors had to live with it and continue to care for our patients to the best of our ability.

Philpott received many honours during his extensive career. He was named the William Blair lecturer by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists for 1948. In 1952 he was awarded an honorary M.D. by Laval, and was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Medicine in 1958. He was a founding member of both the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada and the Canadian Gynaecological Society. He was elected President of the SOGC in 1950. He also served as Regent of the American College of Surgeons from 1948-57, and was its President from 1958-59, one of only four Canadians ever to be elected to that office.

Newlie did not produce any earth-shattering research, published few papers, and was, in his own words, an "average" clinician; yet he is considered as one of McGill's most illustrious graduates. Not only was he an outstanding teacher, but Philpott was a born leader and organizer with enormous personal charisma, who had the reputation of getting things done. He made people want to follow his lead and listen attentively to what he had to say—and he had much to say.

When Newlie Philpott died on December 30, 1999, a relationship that had lasted over fifty years came to an end: a relationship which began with this remarkable man as my teacher, then my mentor, then my colleague, and, finally and most importantly, my friend