

## Arthur Holbrook Bill

1877-1961

*By W. R. Barney, Cleveland, Ohio*

ARTHUR HOLBROOK BILL, Emeritus Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Western Reserve University, died March 9, 1961, in Phoenix, Arizona. He was ill only a short time and was hospitalized for just 3 days. Death was due to a severe virus infection.

The Bills were spending their third winter in Scottsdale. Before going there to spend February and March, they enjoyed a Pacific cruise which had taken them to Honolulu, Tahiti, and Acapulco. This was to be their "Travel Year" as they had already made plans to attend The International Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology in Vienna in September and to travel further in Europe following the meeting.

Dr. Bill was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on Nov. 10, 1877, the son of Herbert Weston Bill and Mary McIlwain Bill. Educated in Cleveland, he was graduated from Western Reserve University in 1897. He received his Masters degree in 1898 and in 1901 his medical degree. He was given an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science by Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio, in 1959.

One of six in his class to take internships, Dr. Bill interned at Lakeside Hospital in Cleveland. Later he had a service at the New York Lying-In Hospital, which was followed by a year of study in various European Clinics.

Returning to Cleveland, Dr. Bill had the

courage, early in his career, to limit his practice to obstetrics. Private cases were few in those days, but his time was full, as he devoted much of it to taking care of the poor in their homes. In 1906 he established a free clinic in his home for patients who could not afford to pay for private care. This was a forerunner of one of his greatest contributions to obstetrics in Cleveland, the founding of the Out-Patient Department of Cleveland Maternity Hospital, later to become affiliated with Western Reserve Medical School. At this time, the Medical School had no department for the clinical teaching of obstetrics, and, as the dispensary grew, senior students were invited to assist in the cases.

By 1909, after being an Assistant in Obstetrics on the teaching staff of the Medical School for one year, he was made Associate Professor and Head of the department.

The dispensary, established with such foresight in Dr. Bill's home, had grown by leaps and bounds and could no longer be handled from there. It was transferred to Lakeside Hospital, thus providing a needed facility for teaching. The Home Delivery Service was conducted from here and instruction was given to the nurses at the hospital and to senior medical students. This became the first official Prenatal Dispensary.

In 1911 he was made Chief of Staff of the small but growing Cleveland Maternity Hospital, a privately endowed institution, estab-

lished originally in 1891. House officers were needed and men with previous surgical and gynecologic experience were chosen. Maternity Hospital moved to a new location in 1912 and had a capacity of 30 beds, later expanded to 60. The organization was known as the Cleveland Maternity Hospital and Dispensary. Dr. Bill continued as head of the combined departments and was also head of the Obstetric Division of the Cleveland City Hospital.

Until 1917, this hospital was a separate entity, although there was a working agreement with the Medical School. At this time, by contract with Western Reserve University, it became the official teaching center for obstetrics. Living quarters were provided for house officers, medical students, and nurses for the Out-Patient Clinics. As the need grew for more dispensaries, they were established in various locations in the city until there were eight in all. A laboratory was established, headed by trained personnel and technicians.

The growth of this hospital was phenomenal, due entirely to the impetus of this great man. It soon became a mecca for visitors from abroad and from all parts of the United States and Canada. By the same token, men who sought training here from other medical schools as well as from Reserve, were sent to success in Cleveland and throughout the United States and Canada. For great as may be the personal achievements of an obstetrical chief of staff, his greater influence is exercised through the young men he trains to carry his skill and ideals throughout the nation. This was indeed one of Dr. Bill's greatest achievements.

In 1925, Maternity Hospital was moved to a large new building in the Medical Center of Western Reserve University. He had designed and supervised the building, and it has served since as a model.

Dr. Bill's title was changed to Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, because of the union of the two departments. The house staff was increased accordingly, along with a tenure of 5 years being required for the combined specialization.

From the beginning of his professional life, Dr. Bill's endeavor was the alleviation of pain during labor. He was one of the pioneers in the use of so-called "Twilight Sleep" which he modified to make safe for the mother and child. He emphasized, always, that this technique should be used only by one trained in the art and that its use should be varied with each patient.

Early in the century he advocated the use of cesarean section in central placenta previa preceded by blood transfusion when so indicated.

His most famous contribution was the use of forceps in the second stage of labor, especially in the persistent posterior position. This was the modified Scanzoni of "Bill maneuver" which varied from the original by rotating the head in the station that was present rather than downward traction and rotation. This was the one great innovation in "The Golden Days" as it obviated laceration of the cervix and the vagina so often encountered in the original maneuver. Dr. Bill invented a special traction handle for the forceps. It was attached to solid blades rather than the fenestrated type. No house officer ever finished his service without a complete knowledge of this procedure.

Another important contribution was stressing the use of episiotomy to preserve the perineum which was at first decried, but later accepted as it is today. As an associate said, "He was a radical conservative."

Such an outstanding career naturally included a large number of published papers. Obstetric literature was enriched by his articles on clinical subjects and the results of laboratory investigation.

In 1948 he reached the age of compulsory retirement from the teaching staff of the Medical School but did not retire from private practice until some years later. He had given a full life to the service of his Medical School, having served for 40 years as a member of its teaching staff and for 39 years as head of the Department of Obstetrics. He was voted the title of Emeritus Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and, as a fitting climax to his distinguished career, the chair

of the department was endowed and named, "The Arthur Holbrook Bill Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology."

Many clubs and societies were enriched by his membership and many honors came his way during his long and full life.

His fraternities were Delta Upsilon and Nu Sigma Nu. He was the recipient of the Nu Sigma Nu national commendation in 1940. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Alpha Omega Alpha, and Sigma Xi.

Dr. Bill was a member of the following medical organizations: American Medical Association, Ohio State Medical Association, Cleveland Academy of Medicine, American Gynecological Society, American Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (President, 1930), New England Obstetrical and Gynecological Society, American College of Surgeons, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Cleveland Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology (Honorary President when formed), the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology, The Pasteur Club of Cleveland, The Cleveland Medical Library Association.

He was also a member of the American Archaeological Society and he was a 32nd Degree Mason. He belonged to the following Cleveland Clubs: the Union Club, the Country Club, the Professional Men's Club, and the Singers Club. The latter was long dear to his heart, and many of us will long remember Dr. Bill's wonderful singing voice.

Dr. Bill had a life-long interest in athletics, beginning in his undergraduate days when

he played basketball, football, and baseball. He went to athletic events at his Alma Mater as often as possible until recently, and he was an active member of the Touchdown Club at Reserve. He was captain of the first basketball team at Adelbert College. Along with his continuous interest in college sports, he followed with equal enthusiasm the games of the Cleveland Indians baseball team and the Cleveland Browns football team.

Arthur Bill was a very modest man, which endeared him to all who had contact with him professionally and otherwise. All of his house officers benefited from the untold hours he spent teaching and encouraging them in their quest for perfection in their chosen field. His great tolerance for anyone who differed with him was outstanding and, if there was criticism, it was constructive.

All of us who were close to him came to love him and to admire his wonderful character which we were privileged to share. As his long-time associate, I feel he is someone who can never be replaced. As he was a pioneer in many ways in his field, he was surely the Father of Good Obstetrics in our part of the country.

Our Association has lost a distinguished and beloved member. No one who knew him will forget his warm friendliness and his happy smile.

Dr. Bill is survived by his wife, Gladys, his brother, Dr. Clarence Bill, a nephew, Dr. Herbert Bill, and a niece, Mrs. James Osborn.



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ARTHUR HOLBROOK BILL was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on Nov. 10, 1877, and died March 11, 1961. He and his brother Clarence C. Bill, Professor of Classics at Western Reserve University for many years, were the only children of Herbert Weston and May McIllwain Bill. His family was long associated with Western Reserve, his father, an architect, having graduated from Western Reserve College in Hudson, Ohio. Both Dr. Bill and his brother were over 6 feet tall and of imposing stature, and both were known for their athletic skills in their early years.

Dr. Arthur Bill received his A.B. degree from Adelbert College of Western Reserve University in 1897 and his Master's degree in 1898. He received his Medical degree from Western Reserve Medical School in 1901. He interned at Lakeside Hospital in Cleveland for 2 years, was at Johns Hopkins in 1902 and at Vassar Hospital in 1903. In 1904 he was at New York Lying-In Hospital where his interest in Obstetrics-Gynecology continued. Dr. Bill returned to Western Reserve University in 1905 as an Assistant in Obstetrics, and in 1909 became Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Obstetrics. In 1912 the Department was moved to 3735 Cedar Avenue where an outpatient delivery service was established and flourished, at one time delivering as many as 200 patients a month in the homes in Cleveland. In 1914 Miss Calvina MacDonald became the Superintendent of Maternity Hospital and co-operated with Dr. Bill in developing plans for a bigger and better

Maternity Hospital. This was one of the first buildings of what is now known as University Hospitals, the Medical Center of Western Reserve University. The old hospital on Cedar Avenue was closed on Nov. 30, 1925, and Dr. Bill and his staff moved to the new building on Adelbert Road. He became Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology in 1927. In 1934 the name of the hospital was changed to MacDonald House honoring Miss MacDonald, who had retired in 1933.

In 1923 Dr. Bill married Miss Gladys Buttermore, who was his constant companion in the years that followed.

Dr. Bill was a member of many medical organizations among them were the American College of Surgeons, the American Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the American Gynecological Society, the New York Lying-In Society, and the local Pasteur Club. He was active in Free Masonry and in many fraternities and clubs, including the Singers' Club. In 1930-1931 he was president of the American Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Through the years he was awarded many professional honors in Cleveland and the nation. He was constantly interested in the training of younger men. Probably he received most credit for his development of a modification of the Scanzoni maneuver for forceps rotation of posterior position of the fetal head. His accomplishments in this direction were coupled with the use of a special traction handle which he designed.

I first learned of Dr. Bill as a medical student in the early 1920's after a visit of the late J. Whitridge Williams to Cleveland. At a class one day Dr. Williams said: "There is a young professor out there who has a lot of ingenuity and good ideas." The Department of Gynecology was moved to MacDonald House in 1936 and thereafter my

association with Dr. Bill became quite close until his retirement from the University as Professor Emeritus in 1948. During these years I felt that a sense of balance and fairness was an outstanding characteristic of this man who was a pioneer in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

*Robert L. Faulkner*

ARTHUR HOLBROOK BILL, A.B., A.M., M.D., F.A.C.S.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, November 10, 1877. Elected to Society, 1928. Active Fellow.

Educated at Adelbert College of Western Reserve University (A.B.), Graduate School of Western Reserve University (A.M.), and School of Medicine, Western Reserve University (M.D.). Graduate work at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Md., and in clinics in Europe.

Interne at Lakeside Hospital, Cleveland, Ohio, and resident surgeon at the New York Lying-In Hospital. Professor of obstetrics and gynecology in the School of Medicine, Western Reserve University. Director of obstetrics of Maternity Hospital of the University Hospitals of Cleveland, Ohio. Head of Department of Obstetrics of Cleveland City Hospital. Director of the Out-Patient Obstetrical Department of Maternity Hospital and Western Reserve University.

Member of American Association of Obstetricians, Gynecologists and Abdominal Surgeons, American College of Surgeons, American Medical Association, and Pasteur Club of Cleveland. Also member of Delta Upsilon, Nu Sigma Nu and Phi Beta Kappa fraternities. President of Alumni Association of the School of Medicine of Western Reserve University (1929).

Maternity Hospital, 2105 Adelbert Road, Cleveland, Ohio.



*Arthur H. Bill*