

Presentation of the 2001 Jean Hamburger Award to Roscoe R. Robinson

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I am privileged to present the 2001 Jean Hamburger Award to Roscoe Ross Robinson, or Ike, as he is known universally, Vice Chancellor Emeritus for Health Affairs and Professor of Medicine at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, and Past President of both the American Society of Nephrology and the International Society of Nephrology. This occasion is a personal honor for me because Ike has been my friend and mentor for over 40 years.

The Alfred Newton Richards Award and the Jean Hamburger Award are the highest accolades presented by the International Society of Nephrology. The Jean Hamburger Award is given for extraordinary contributions to international nephrology. Very few people have made contributions to international nephrology that have been as towering as Ike's, and it is for these contributions that we honor him today. There is a common thread linking these contributions, and indeed, all of Ike's career, namely, the innate goodness and humanity of the man.

Ike is a native of Oklahoma. His father was President of Northern Oklahoma Junior College and subsequently of the University of Central Oklahoma, which was also Ike's alma mater. Ike's father was Virgil to Ike's Dante, guiding him into a commitment to academia.

Ike matriculated at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine in 1950, where he was one of the three leading students in his class. But unassailably, Ike's greatest accomplishment in medical school was his successful courting of Ann Allen (Fig. 5), who has been his wife, friend, and singularly intimate companion for nearly 50 years. Ike claims that he found Ann barefoot on the banks of a muddy river. But the truth is that Ann married her father's janitor. In medical school, Ike worked as a janitor and as a driver for Ann's father. Ike and Ann's marriage has yielded joy and serenity for them, and two lovely daughters: Susan, who lives in Baltimore; and Brooke, who lives in Nashville.

Ike was the first Oklahoma graduate to serve as a house officer at Duke University. There he fell under the spell, and I use the word advisedly, of his and my mentor, Eugene Stead. Dr. Stead's relentless demand for excellence, coupled with what had been instilled in Ike by his father, were the key catalysts for all of Ike's future activities.

In 1962, Dr. Stead asked Ike to form and direct a Nephrology Division. The Division began with four peo-

ple: Ike, Caulie Gunnells, Jim Clapp, and Chuck Hayes. As Division Director, Ike created a rich collegial environment hospitable to investigators, clinicians, and clinician-investigators. He nurtured us all. He was a solid investigator and a dazzling clinical mentor. And his daily morning report, which I still remember fondly, was a remarkably elegant merging of clinical medicine, pathophysiology, and compassion for ill people.

The results of Ike's leadership were superb. From that initial group of four faculty, Ike and his colleagues trained at least 60 fellows. And, to his credit, a minimum of 13 graduates of his training program have become Nephrology Directors, Chairs, Editors, and/or Directors of other programs over the years.

A sampling of Ike's intellectual progeny is limited deliberately because of time constraints: Gabriel Navar, Chair of Physiology at Tulane and President Emeritus of the American Physiological Society; Vincent Dennis, Director of Nephrology at The Cleveland Clinic Foundation; Jim Schafer, President Emeritus of the American Physiological Society, a Homer Smith Awardee, and Editor Emeritus of the *American Journal of Physiology*; Craig Tisher, Director Emeritus of Nephrology at Gainesville, President Emeritus of the American Society of Nephrology, Treasurer Emeritus of the International Society of Nephrology, and Editor Emeritus of the *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology*; and William Stead, Director of the Informatics Center at Vanderbilt University.

There are more, many more, but the achievements of these individuals should convey to you a clear insight into the milieu of Duke University's nephrology in Ike's time. And the tradition persists. Now led brilliantly by Tom Coffman, Duke has one of the outstanding nephrology units in the world.

The next triumphs were Ike's years at Vanderbilt University. Ike served as Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs at Vanderbilt University between 1981 and 1997. His contributions at Vanderbilt are a paradigm of academic leadership. Some of his structural contributions to the Vanderbilt campus include the following:

- In 1985, the Vanderbilt Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Hospital;
- In 1988, the Vanderbilt Ambulatory Clinic, which



Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

permitted more than a threefold increase in ambulatory visits to Vanderbilt;

- In 1989, the Medical Research Building I, renamed the Ann and Roscoe R. Robinson Medical Research Building in 2000;
- In 1994, the Annette and Irwin Eskind Biomedical Library, which also houses the Vanderbilt Informatics Center;
- In 1995, The Medical Research Building II; and
- In 1996, Medical Center East.

However, big buildings are not, in my view, indices to academic excellence. People, and their accomplishments, are what divide the great from the average. Some examples of the high scholarship at Vanderbilt University under Ike's leadership are listed:

- Four of Vanderbilt's basic science departments, whose chairs were recruited by Ike, are considered among the top 10 in the country;
- Under Ike's leadership, a sixfold increase in grants and contracts awarded to Vanderbilt, currently amounting to \$120 million annually;
- Six faculty members were elected to the National Academy of Science;
- One faculty member was a Nobel Laureate;
- Finally, during Ike's tenure, the full-time faculty grew from 450 to approximately 1000.

These data, representative to be sure, provide ample testimony that Ike's legacy will assuredly endure.

And Ike's legacy must be viewed in the following context. Academic medicine in our country has been vexed, and often divided acrimoniously, for more than a decade because of difficulties in balancing mercantile pressures with academic tradition. It is in this frame of reference that one should judge Ike's contributions. He has an unwavering commitment to exalted academic performance, exceptional collegiality, and fiscal growth, all of this coupled with an insistence on providing exemplary care for ill people regardless of their financial resources. This splendid mix of pragmatism with academic and clinical gallantry is no small accomplishment.

I turn, finally, to Ike's contributions to the International Society of Nephrology. Credit for the International Society rests on the extraordinary vision of the late Jean Hamburger, who had the idea of bringing together students of nephrology from all over the world for intellectual dialog and scientific meetings. It is fair to say that Ike's contributions have been pivotal to achieving Hamburger's vision.

Let me be more specific. In 1972, the International Society of Nephrology launched a new journal, *Kidney International*, intended to become the flagship of the Society and the leading journal of nephrology in the world. Ike was selected to serve as the founding editor

of *Kidney International*, and held that position for nearly 13 years.

Under Ike's leadership, *Kidney International* became a remarkably successful academic instrument. And Ike's managerial skills with *Kidney International* were such that the journal became a profitable venture that provided the fiscal driving force for the development of virtually all of the subsequent activities of the Society.

Ike's contributions with *Kidney International* need to be viewed in the context of the times. In 1972, the science of nephrology was meager in many regions of the world. Yet, the nascent *Kidney International* faced formidable competition with an array of distinguished journals.

To resolve this conundrum, Ike balanced stringent editorial standards with a unique editorial style. First-rate manuscripts were accepted rapidly. But, the most elegant facet of Ike's editorship was the style of his letters of rejection, which were, in fact, brilliant tutorials. They were tactful instead of accusatory, suffused with personal warmth, and softened by a note of optimism indicating that a manuscript might be salvaged by added experimentation or extensive revision. And so it was not unusual to see a rejected paper reappear on Ike's desk a year or so later, but now as a first-rate manuscript.

What are the consequences of his remarkable stewardship? The academic reputation of *Kidney International* is unassailable, and *Kidney International* has met the Society's goal of being global in scope. And under Saulo Klahr's editorship, the tradition continues.

Ike's second major contribution to international nephrology was to develop the Forefronts in Nephrology series. The goal of the Forefronts series, conceived originally by then-President Donald Seldin, was to bring together leading renal investigators with peers from flanking disciplines such as molecular genetics, molecular biology and cell biology. Recall in this context that, in

1985, investigative work in the renal community was still oriented heavily toward classical physiology, pathophysiology and immunology, and that the more ecumenical notions of molecular biology had not yet had a significant impact on nephrology. You can judge from the program for this meeting that the latter statement no longer obtains.

The first Forefronts meeting was organized by Ike in 1986. Its title, "Molecular Biology of the Kidney," articulates its theme. And to my knowledge, this meeting was the first specific gathering that brought to bear, in an explicit way, the powerful resources of molecular biology to renal research.

Ike's third and fourth major contributions to international nephrology occurred during his tenure as President of International Society of Nephrology, from 1990 to 1993. He recognized that the International Congresses faced two key problems. First, Ike understood that there might be significant information gaps between highly developed nations and maturing nations. Consequently, Ike organized the 1993 Jerusalem meeting using a thematic format that provided a first-rate menu, broadly based, and attractive to virtually anyone in the renal community.

Second, Ike saw that some national meetings, particularly those in Western Europe and the United States, had become, in effect, competing meetings. It was Ike who developed a visionary solution to this problem. He proposed that Society meetings might be coupled to meetings of national or regional societies. This first World Congress of Nephrology is, in fact, the consequence of Ike's vision nearly a decade ago.

Ike (Fig. 6), were Jean Hamburger alive today, he would embrace you in traditional Gallic fashion for your extraordinary career, for your remarkable persona, and especially for your contributions to global nephrology. Instead, it is my privilege today to present you with the Award that bears Jean Hamburger's name.