



A tribute to George C. Hoffman, MD

RALPH GREEN, MD, CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF LABORATORY HEMATOLOGY

This year marks the thirtieth year that George C. Hoffman has served on the staff of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation and coincides with the outgoing year of his Presidency of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists. To mark these occasions, the *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine* is publishing a two-part festschrift.

Though a clinical pathologist by training, George's contributions to medicine and to the Foundation transcend the confines of a single specialty. A graduate of Cambridge University, the young Dr. Hoffman came across to the USA in 1957 to do a special fellowship in clinical pathology with Dr. John King, here. This was during the time that laboratory hematology was just beginning to emerge as a separate subspecialty, growing as a chimeric offshoot from the main stems of clinical hematology and clinical pathology. In those years at the CCF, the clinical labs were run by John King and clinical hematology by John Battle. Drs. King and Battle knew a good thing when they saw one, and they persuaded George to remain.

George took the seedling that was laboratory hematology and nurtured it. Under his tender care, it grew into a sturdy sapling, well-rooted in the rich pabulum of the Cleveland Clinic environment. Over the years it grew and spread its boughs. Fruits from its training program have seeded hematology laboratories around the country and the world. Modest gardener that he is, George does not claim the credit that is his due, but rather takes quiet pride in an achievement that is admired by all.

In 1970, Dr. George Hoffman became the first Chairman of the newly created Department of Laboratory He-



matology, a position he held until 1981 when he was appointed Chairman of the entire Division of Laboratory Medicine. From 1978 to 1982 he served on the Board of Governors of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. After George stepped down from the Division Chair in 1985, a postgraduate course in Laboratory Medicine was held in his honor. Some of the papers in this festschrift are updated presentations from that course. George then came back "home" to hematology where he now functions as a senior physician. His current level of activ-

ity, however, would put many a younger man to shame.

George Hoffman, perhaps more than any other member of the Cleveland Clinic Professional Staff, is an embodiment of the mission of the Foundation. Patient care, teaching, research—he has made signal contributions to them all: not each in isolation, but melded in a natural ensemble of activity.

George has never isolated himself in the laboratory. His diagnostic skills so well-honed by extensive experience are not confined to the microscope. In his heyday, the redoubtable George was known to lead forays of pathology residents to the hospital floors in the same way as he was ready to receive an invading entourage of internists who would come to do battle over the interpretation of a blood smear or bone marrow. George felt as much at home at the bedside as he did behind the controls of a microscope. To generations of pathology and clinical residents who have trained at the Cleveland Clinic, George Hoffman is a legend. He is the consummate teacher—knowledgeable, patient, and always with a spark of humor. Any resident who did not give George a rave review was unlikely to have been paying atten-

tion—a rare event in itself because maestro Hoffman at the chalkboard has a knack of rivetting one's attention, even after a night on call or an all-night game of poker!

In the area of research, George has been active on several fronts. Though mainly interested in red cells and their disorders, "Hoffman GC" may be found among the authors of numerous articles on a variety of topics in hematology. He has done much to foster and promote research by his colleagues and proteges. George has been involved in drawing up several blueprints for research here and was instrumental in establishing the Research Programs Committee. To list all of the committees and societal appointments, honorary and elected, that George has held would fill much more space than is allotted for this brief introduction.

Unlike the man himself, George's honors are far from modest. Regionally, he has served on the boards of the American Red Cross, the National Hemophilia Foundation, and the American Sickle Cell Anemia Association; he has been President of the Ohio Society of

Pathologists.

Nationally, he is Chairman of the Medical Advisory Committee of the ASCAA. In the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, George's contributions culminated in 1987 when he was named President. A short time before, George became an American citizen, but accolades from across the Atlantic continue. Having been elected as a Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists in 1976, George was recently nominated for honorary membership in the (British) Association of Clinical Pathologists.

Last but not least, George C. Hoffman served as the Editor of this Journal from 1970 to 1981.

Along with all these activities, George has found time, with his charming and dedicated wife Anna, to raise four sons.

If he has slowed down over the years, no one has noticed it. It's always easy to find him—wherever the action is.