



HENRY OLIVER MERTZ

1884-1969

In 1918 my father referred me to a new associate of his for advice on the treatment of nephritis which had compelled me to delay a year of my education. Not feeling ill, I was truculent about the advice of my betters. The reason for this particular referral was that this physician too had had nephritis with the attendant loss of time it entailed. In his friendly but serious fashion, he outlined his own experience, applying it to me in a living way which made the prescribed rest period more palatable. This was my first acquaintance with him.

It is my purpose not to mourn him but to make Henry Oliver Mertz known to many of you who have become members of the American Association of Genito-Urinary Surgeons since he retired in 1952 and to praise him as a truly great physician.

Although his name became widely known, he was a product entirely of the middle west, in birth, education and practice. Of German descent, his father, James Edward Mertz, a teacher and merchant, lived in Round Head, Ohio when Uncle Henry (as we affectionately

called him) was born on April 5, 1884. His mother, Alice June, bore Henry (the oldest), Gladys, Katherine (later to become an R.N.) and Edwin. Henry O. Mertz attended Ohio Northern University. I remember his winsome story of a dashing sport buggy and horse which he had to surrender while in college due to a mild national recession at the time. Those were the days of 2-year colleges. He received his degree in music. The violin was his forte.

What prompted him with this background to study medicine, he never told me but, in 1904, his parents moved to Indianapolis to make a home so that he could attend the Medical College of Indiana. At that time, our state (which now has only one medical school) had numerous schools. During the period of his medical education, his college merged with Purdue University and, by the time he graduated in 1908, the schools consolidated under the aegis of Indiana University. During his senior year, he became ill with nephritis. Although he was prevented by sickness from taking the final examinations

the school kindly awarded his diploma because of his excellent record. His parents then returned to Round Head where Dr. Mertz had a 2-year rest period before actually starting the practice of medicine.

On September 30, 1912 Dr. Mertz married Ida Fullerton who blessed his household until his death on September 12, 1969. Three children, Jane, Richard and John Henry Oliver, arrived in that order to complete the family. Jane lives with her family in Atlanta. Richard practices dentistry in North Carolina, while Jack is a partner in our present firm of urologists.

About 1911 Dr. Mertz elected to practice in LaPorte, Indiana, associated with Dr. A. R. Simon. Although he had received an internship, he was unable to accept it in 1908 because of his illness. Neither the illness nor lack of internship ever retarded him nor prevented him from reaching the heights of his profession. A keen student, he was also a warm-hearted clinician. Before he had been in practice 2 years, we found him reading urologic papers at LaPorte, Gary, Lima, Ohio and Detroit. He just naturally gravitated to urogenital surgery and especially to pediatric urology. The first published paper we can find was "Vesical Calculi in Children" in the *Journal of the Indiana State Medical Association*, November 1915. His attention was early called to congenital abnormalities. Three papers published in 1924, dealing with duplication of the excretory system, are still classics. The list of his papers which we have found comes to an even 100, although there may have been more.

In 1918 Dr. Mertz moved to Indianapolis where he joined forces in a partnership with Drs. W. N. Wishard, Sr. and H. G. Hamer for the practice of urology. When the James Whitcomb Riley Hospital for Children opened its doors about 1924, it was only natural that Dr. Mertz was put in charge of pediatric urology there. When my father retired as chairman of the department in the Indiana University School of Medicine in 1936, Dr. W. D. Gatch, dean of the school, appointed Dr. Mertz as professor and chairman of the department. He bridged the gap between the early pioneers in the field, when it was largely a descriptive subject, to the

modern day urology which has become involved with physiology, bacteriology, radiology, embryology, endocrinology and many of the basic sciences. During his tenure he succeeded in establishing the first full-time residency in urology at the medical school, filled by Dr. Robert A. Garrett (1946). When Dr. Mertz retired in 1952 he continued as titular head until 1954 when Dr. Garrett became chairman. From 1880 to 1970, 3 incumbents have graced this office, probably a record.

In 1930 Dr. Mertz became a member of the American Association of Genito-Urinary Surgeons whose meetings he enriched with original contributions until his retirement in 1952. He was certified at the beginning of our Board in 1935. Although not a medical politician, he served at one time or another as president of the medical staff of the Methodist Hospital, chairman of the Section on Surgery of the Indiana State Medical Association and member of the first Admissions Committee of the Medical School and its Executive Committee. During the war, he was active on the Dean's Committee.

Courtesy, compassion and capability—he had all three in great measure. He was a stickler for ethical relationships with other doctors. No referring physician ever failed to be taken into his confidence in the care of the patient. Except in an emergency, no other consultant was ever called without the approval of the referring doctor, who always received a written report of the patient's case. He was compassionate with his patients and truly sympathized with them in their illness. They adored him. Capability he had without limit—at the operating table, at cystoscopy, at interpretation of urograms, at diagnosis and at the bedside. His family called him blessed.

When he retired in 1952, he moved first to Florida and later to Atlanta. Although not in practice, he continued to study and work on "my Riley stuff". At least one published paper grew out of this period, a compilation of traumatic injury of the kidney of all pediatric cases, from the opening of Riley Hospital in 1924 until Dr. Mertz' retirement in 1952. Fishing, reading and writing brightened his release from clinical duties. In June

1969 he suffered a stroke which slowly eroded his vitality, causing death on September 12, 1969.

Somewhere in *Jane Eyre*, the statement is made that feeling without judgment is a washy draught indeed, but judgment without feeling is a bitter morsel unfit for human

deglutition. Dr. Mertz had bountiful resources in judgment and feeling, attributes which made him a great and revered physician. To know him was to love him and respect him. He is greatly missed.

*Wm. Niles Wishard, Jr.*