

Dr. White, 77, Operates 7 Times in Day

By George Kennedy

Dr. Charles Stanley White, Washington's senior surgeon, is 77 years old today. He has been operating here for more than 50 years.

The other day he performed seven operations of abdominal surgery. That crowded his schedule. He did not get through until 2:30 p.m., just in time to begin his office hours.

A man of medium height, he is a meticulous dresser—always well groomed. With his straight hair parted near the middle, keen eyesight and slight case of round shoulders which has been his stance since boyhood, his appearance has not changed much since his 50s. His hair was black then. It is iron-gray now.

He is the principal developer of intra-arterial transfusions which are saving many lives when the massive hemorrhages sometimes incidental to duodenal ulcers and to childbirth have reduced blood pressure and pulse to zero. The transfused blood is forced up an artery to the heart, instead of letting the heart attempt to pump up blood transfused into a vein. Again and again patients have been kept alive by this new method until the surgeon has been able to clamp off the bleeding in the interior.

Medical Journal Author.

Despite his heavy schedule, he has found time to write more than 100 articles reporting his work in the medical journals. All this has brought his alma mater, George Washington University Medical School, where he taught surgery for more than 40 years, and the Washington hospitals where he has done his work, to the favorable attention of the medical world.

His office files contain case histories of 53,000 patients.

He also has business responsibilities. He is president of the Washington Medical Building Corp., the Columbia Medical Building Corp. and the Doctors' Hospital and a director of the Riggs National Bank.

When the Puerto Rican nationalists shot up Congress on March 1 and Representative Bentley of Michigan was taken to Casualty Hospital with a bullet hole in his abdomen, Dr. White was sent for. He had the Congressman on the operating table for almost two hours as he repaired the damage the bullet had done as it passed through the intestines.

It was a painstaking operation. The man's liver had been shattered and had to be packed together again.

Reporters were waiting in the lobby for Dr. White when he finally came down in the elevator.

"Was the operation successful?" one asked.

He answered, "If it wasn't I'd have gone out the backdoor."

Representative Bentley now is back on the floor making speeches.

Lifelong Washingtonian.

Dr. White is a lifelong Washingtonian. He was born in a comfortable two-story house at Eleventh and E streets S.W., one of nine children—seven sons and two daughters.

His father, George W. White, operated a foundry in Southwest Washington and was president of the Belt Line Street Railroad. His maternal grandfather, William A. Harris, had a carpenter shop in Port Tobacco, Md., in the 1830s and later moved into Southwest Washington. Mr. Harris had two sons and seven daughters (Dr. White's mother was one) who married and, for the most part, bore large families. Young Charlie White counted his Southwest cousins by the dozens, Wimsatts, Stephensons, Churches and Harrisens.

Little Charlie was a good student. His mother preserved his sixth-grade report card from Bradley School for March, 1890. It read: "Department, 100%; scholarship, 99.9%."

Southwest was "The Island" in those days, separated from the rest of the Capital by the canal. Charlie had a good time. He swam off the Stephenson coal dock (owned by an uncle) and played a pretty good game of ball. He had early decided to become a doctor.

He went right from high school into George Washington Medical School, which was possible in those days. His father died when he was halfway through and he had to get a job and go to school nights. He was graduated in 1898; finished his internships at GW and Columbia Hospitals in 1901. In 1903 he was appointed resident superintendent of the old Emergency Hospital at Fifteenth street and Ohio avenue (on part of the site of the Department of Commerce Building) and rode the ambulance for five years.

"Magic" in Emergency.

The Emergency ambulance was horsedrawn and the drivers took pride in making it roll faster than the fire engines. One emergency call brought him to a little colored boy who had stuck his head in a length of stovepipe and couldn't get out. A man was trying to file off an iron band but wasn't making much progress.

Young Dr. White remembered a lesson from obstetrics—that you should tip the infant's head forward. He reached in with his arm, tipped the head, the pipe came off and the crowd that had assembled cheered as though he had performed a stunt of magic.

The importance of the improvements that have made the great advances in surgery possible—better anaesthesia, blood transfusions and anti-biotics—is well illustrated by what hap-



DR. CHARLES STANLEY WHITE.

pened in one of his early operations.

He was operating on the infected knee of a 12-year-old colored boy. The anaesthetic was chloroform. Respiration suddenly ceased. The pulse weakened and finally became imperceptible. Artificial respiration was attempted, but was unsuccessful. Dr. White had read in a European medical journal of instances of restoring activity by massaging the heart. He opened the abdomen and worked the heart with his fingers for 7 minutes. He was just about to give up when a slight pulse was detected. He kept on. In 12 minutes normal heart action was restored, but the boy died the next day of blood poisoning from the infected knee.

Probably none of those things would have happened today. Modern anaesthesia would have allowed continued respiration. Transfusions would have strengthened the patient and anti-biotics probably would have controlled the infection.

Wrote About Case.

He published the experience in the Maryland Medical Journal under the title: "Preliminary report of a case of resuscitation of the heart by subdiaphragmatic massage."

About the same time his willingness to resort to extreme measures in an extreme emergency saved a life. A 22-year-old Negro, stabbed in the heart, was brought in. He was still living but fast bleeding to death. To stop the bleeding, Dr. White cut through three ribs and took six stitches in the heart. The man lived.

About this time the famous "Doc" White was not the young surgeon but his younger brother, Guy Harris White. A dentist by training, he had become one of the best known men in America. He was a pitcher for the "Hitless Wonders," the Chicago White Sox penant winners of 1906—Nick Altrock, Jiggs Donohue et al—who beat the Chicago Cubs in the World Series despite the famed Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance combination. "Doc" White, whose record of five shutouts in a row still stands, lives in Silver Spring. He is the only other survivor of the family of nine.

When Dr. White started to specialize in surgery in 1908, Dr. J. Ford Thompson, a Civil War veteran and professor of surgery at George Washington, was the senior surgeon of Washington. Others were Dr. Tulley Vaughan and Dr. William P. Carr.

Although young Dr. White's reputation was growing, his list of patients was not studded with Senators, cabinet officers or diplomats. He did set a broken arm for Uncle Joe Cannon, the Speaker of the House in the Wilson administration. Perhaps the greatest "name" on the operating table in his career was that of a patient who underwent an appendectomy back in 1902 just after Dr. White's internship. The patient was Walter Reed, the conqueror of yellow fever. Dr. White was the anaesthetist. The appendix was ruptured before the incision. Col. Reed, who was 51, died of the ensuing peritonitis. Present-day anti-biotics probably could have saved him.

Medicine in Washington was under the shadow of Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, where Osler, Kelly, Welch and Halsted were holding forth. Arnad Gerster was the great name in New York. In the West it was the Mayo brothers of Rochester, Minn., and John B. Murphy of Chicago.

Married Midwest Beauty.

Young Dr. White went to Baltimore a few times to hear Osler and the others lecture. But for stimulation he preferred to take the long trip to Rochester, Minn., and sit at the feet of the Mayos and their associates. In 1914 he married Miss Blanche M. Strong of Rochester, Minn., whose pictures in the society pages recounting the event well justify the statement that she "was recognized as one of the beauties of the Middle West."

He had already purchased a house on Sixteenth street which he sold after World War I. The Whites now live at 2301 Kalorama road N.W. They have two children, Dr. Charles Stanley White, jr., and Mrs. Mary Alice Kimball of White Plains, N. Y.

His published papers show the wide scope of his interests. The first, in 1903, was on puerperal septicaemia, the "child bed" fever that killed mothers and babies until sterilization halted it after the turn of the century.

He was a Navy lieutenant commander in World War I. During the World War II period his papers were largely on the use of plasma. His specialty became abdominal surgery, the removal of ulcers, cancerous growths, infected appendicitis, gall bladders, spleens, sections of the intestine, even whole stomachs.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of this surgeon, who as a young man did not hesitate to massage a heart with his fingers or to sew one up, has been the intra-arterial transfusions.

Dr. White was the first to publish reports on the amazing revival of heart action following prompt forcing of blood into an artery. At Doctors' Hospital today a kit of sterilized instruments and an experienced team is ready to make such a transfusion in a matter of minutes.

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