

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

HALE FOREMAN SHIRLEY (1901 – 1974)

Hale Shirley was born in Minburn, Iowa on September 29, 1901 of English, Scotch and German descent. He grew up and went to school in Iowa. At the University of Iowa he made an outstanding record and obtained his M.D. in 1927. He then undertook specialty training in Pediatrics in Iowa and St. Louis, following which he spent two years as a member of a medical clinic in Lincoln, Nebraska. It was there that he recognized the need for Psychiatry in the practice of Pediatrics, and he returned to Iowa for his Psychiatric Residency. This conjunction of skills was most unusual at the time, and proved to be exceedingly far-sighted -- adding much to his ultimate contribution. He went to Johns Hopkins in the great era of Adolf Meyer for a fellowship in Child Psychiatry with Leo Kanner and Esther Richards. This provided further impetus to his thinking about development of human behavior through the life cycle. In 1937 he returned to the University of Iowa as an Assistant Professor for his first faculty position.

Through an invitation made possible by a generous grant from the Commonwealth Fund in 1938, Hale Shirley came to Stanford the following year. He was the first person in the Medical School to hold academic appointments in two departments -- Medicine and Pediatrics -- the beginning perhaps of the later discovered conjoint teaching. From 1939 until 1971, he was a vital, productive and generous member of the Stanford faculty, teaching five years past retirement age because he had so much to contribute.

Hale Shirley was one of the authentic pioneers in Child Psychiatry. The field scarcely existed when he began to practice and teach it. When he came to Stanford in 1939, he created some puzzlement by asking for a playroom. There was no space available, and play had not been thought of as a part of medicine at that time. But with the flexibility and imagination that has characterized Stanford for so long, the Dean of the Medical School made his conference room available as the first child psychiatry playroom -one of many innovations in Hale's career.

The Commonwealth Fund grant provided the means to create Stanford's first Child Psychiatry Clinic in a modest house near the Stanford Hospital in San Francisco. Hale built a small, cohesive, highly competent staff and undertook one of the first systematic training programs in the field, always remembering his heritage in Pediatrics and striving to link the two fields - in a way that was well ahead of his time. His clinic was one of the charter members of the American Association of Psychiatric Clinics for Children. He was one of the founding members of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry. Virtually every organization of any consequence in Child Psychiatry benefited from his early participation, his good judgment, and his exceptional personal qualities.

He was also one of the first to be concerned about the inequitable distribution of psychiatric services for children. In the 1950s, he gave much time and energy to the development of mental health programs for rural and small town children in the central valley of California. In this, his vision, translated into a practical program, was one of the forerunners of what later came to be the national program of community mental health centers.

Perhaps his most influential and far-reaching contributions grew out of three of his books. Psychiatry for the Pediatrician, published in 1948, made clear that Pediatricians were in a crucial position to help parents cope with problems of development and provide an adequate environment for the growing child. He always felt it was part of his responsibility to facilitate the ability of Pediatricians to meet these difficult tasks. Another important book, The Child, His Parents and The Physician, was published in 1954. His most recent book, Pediatric Psychiatry, published in 1963, became a valued text.

With the death of Hale Shirley on October 7, 1974, the cause of child health lost a strong ally, but his contributions will endure.

Family ties were central to Hale's life -- professionally and personally. He was married to Mildred Weaver in 1931 and they enriched each other's lives until her tragic accidental death about 15 years ago. They had three children, Bill, Bob and Barbara, who with Hale's second wife and long-time colleague, Helen, survive him.

To sketch Hale's background and accomplishments is to say a great deal -- and yet far less than needs to be said. Perhaps most important were the personal qualities that made him unique. Yet they are hardest to capture and express. In a world so full of competitiveness and self-aggrandizement, he was genuinely, truly, authentically modest and generous. He was consistently unassuming, utterly unpretentious, unfailingly considerate of others. Yet he was also full of initiative; his career was marked by a succession of innovations; and he maintained high standards. He was honest and direct; never devious or destructive. He led by quietly, unobtrusively gaining the confidence of his associates. He was characterized by patient efforts at understanding, respectful exchange among peers, and joint problem solving in a spirit of compassion.

He was unfailingly kind to newcomers, tolerant of differing viewpoints, and dependable in relations with other people. It was fascinating to see the gradually dawning awareness of students that this modest, unassuming man had so much to offer -- in his professional role and as a human being.

Working with him was consistently enjoyable. He never lost his sense of humor even in the most difficult circumstances. It was reflected in his writings as well as his personal contacts. He bore suffering and tragedy with grace and courage. He was resilient in the face of difficulty, patient with human foibles, exacting in his standards for himself, and deeply compassionate.

He was, in short, a remarkable human being. It is easy to underestimate such a person -- never flashy, never advertising his own accomplishments, so often deferring to others. But those of us who knew him well make no mistake; this was a man of accomplishment, character, integrity and fundamental human virtues of a high order.

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