

Presentation of Howland Award to Allan M. Butler

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In the spirit of our discipline, I would like to trace for you some of the many events, accomplishments and attributes which have led the American Pediatric Society to choose Allan Macy Butler to be a recipient of its Howland Award.

Dr. Butler was born in Yonkers, New York, the son of a stockbroker. Even at an early age, we can discern some of his creative and organizational talents. Note that in the carpentry class (fig. 1), it was Allan who held the fruits of the labor; his brothers held the tools. In 1912, he entered Princeton (fig. 2) and upon graduating four years later, was slated to become a bond salesman on Wall Street in the firm of William A. Reed—now Dillon, Reed and Co. (fig. 3). His desk in that institution happened to be next to that of James Forrestal. On a Saturday morning following New Year's Day in 1917, Allan said to him, 'Jim, I have decided that I am not going to have an eighth of a point on the stock exchange as a major interest in my life, so I am resigning today'. Forrestal indicated that he didn't want this as a major interest either, but said he was going to stay on the job until he had made a million. He stayed, made his million, became the first Secretary of Defense, had a mental breakdown and took his own life just before the end of World War II. Allan points out that he hasn't made a million, but he is still here today.

On the Wednesday after resigning, he joined a British Infantry Reserve Officer Training Corp at Oxford and eventually was commissioned Second Lieutenant in the Field Artillery, a discipline in which he had no training or experience. When he joined the Sixth Field Artillery Division of the American Expeditionary Force and was told to fire a battery in the morning, he arose early, found the first Sergeant and said, 'Sarge, I have heard guns go off, but have no idea of how they do'. The sergeant put his hands on Allan's shoulder and

said, 'Lieutenant, just stay next to me'. Allan claims to have stayed next to 'people who know' ever since.

While serving as supply officer (fig. 4), Sixth Field Artillery, Allan displayed some of the independence of thought and action for which he is so well known. On two occasions, for reasons to be described shortly, he was cited for Court Martial. The first time this was for not obeying a regimental order to hold a 6:00 a.m. reveille; his reason was that the men had difficulty getting their cold, swollen feet with wet socks into their wet shoes. The second time, he let his men fall out on the left side of the road, there being a precipice on the right. But there was a General Order to fall out on the right, and it so happened that the General Headquarters staff car came along while his men were resting against the bank on the left. Happily, there is another side to this legend. On December 13, 1918, the Commander of the First Division of the American Expeditionary Force in Germany cited Captain Allan M. Butler as having 'shown the greatest efficiency and zeal in the performance of his duties. Under the most trying conditions of weather, roads and traffic, he has by constant effort kept his vehicles and animals in such excellence of condition and appearance as invariably to elicit the commendation of his superiors'.

In 1919, following the end of World War I, he got a job as efficiency expert on the docks of the Cunard Steamship Company in New York (fig. 5). One of the things that he tried to do was to get the Cunard, White Star and French lines, each of which had docks adjacent to each other, to consolidate their dock operations. By doing so, they would have a steady enough flow of boats loading and unloading cargo to permit the hiring of labor by the year instead of by four-hour shifts. This would stabilize their jobs and hopefully work to the advantage of all concerned. But the companies said, 'How could we consolidate operations?

We are competitors!' He got little help from the Longshoreman's Union, apparently because this move might give union leaders a less important role.

His shift from industry to medicine came a year later, when he was scheduled to be Operation's Manager of the Cunard—New York Central Terminal Corporation in New York Harbor. These plans were foiled by the passage of high tariff and restricted immigration laws by the Harding Administration and Congress. As a consequence, the Terminal Corporation was dissolved, and Allan found himself suddenly out of a job. To gain some perspective while thinking over what he would do next, he took a job as a coal miner near Philipsberg, Pennsylvania. While serving there, as a result of nearly being blown up he gained a strong sense of the need for public safety measures. This led to the decision to study physics and chemistry, a decision designed among other things to make him a little less vulnerable to politics. Shortly afterwards, while eating lunch with his newly acquired bride, Mabel, on the lawn at the Columbia University Summer School, a Princeton classmate by the name of Stewart Mudd came along and asked what he was doing. On learning that he was studying chemistry, Dr. Mudd asked Allan why he was not pursuing this within the framework of medicine. The end result was that Allan matriculated in the Harvard Medical School in 1922, at the age of 28 years.

His course in Harvard Medical School was somewhat unusual. For instance, when he found that a course in Physical Chemistry conflicted with courses in Pediatrics and Psychiatry, he skipped the latter two. Likewise, when he disagreed with Professor Hale of Pharmacology about the use of the English system of dosages, he felt that the best way to argue his point was to give dosages only in the metric system, so he was given a failing mark. Consequently, when he came up for graduation, it turned out that he had not attended courses in two major subjects, had a failure in another and yet, *mirabile dictu*, was graduated an AOA student.

At the time of his graduation in 1926, it was customary among a number of the leading teaching hospitals to feel that interns and residents should devote themselves completely to their profession in a priestly and celibate manner. Consequently, married men such as Allan were essentially taboo. So Allan went to the Rockefeller Institute (fig.6) as a Fellow with Van Slyke for two years, after which he returned to Harvard as a tutor in Biochemical Sciences with Professor L.J. Henderson. In the ensuing years, he became associated with James Gamble at the Children's Hospital, began to work on the wards, became appointed as an instructor in pediatrics at the Harvard Medical School. Subsequently, he has somehow managed to persuade

the authorities of Massachusetts, Michigan and California to grant him a license to practice medicine in their respective states, and one wonders whether he now has the distinction of being the only physician in the USA who is licensed to practice in three states and who has never had either an internship or residency.

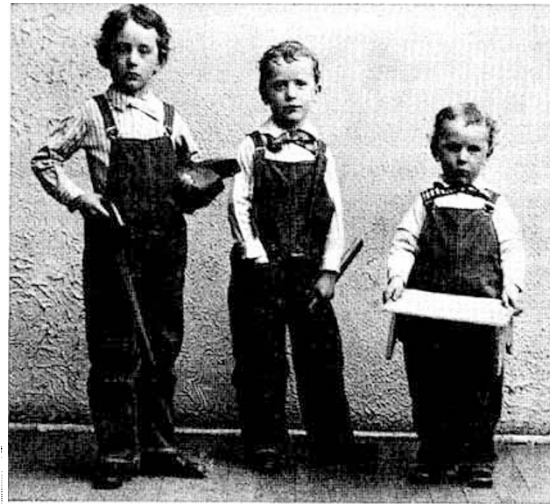


Fig. 1. Allan Butler in Carpentry Class. Note that Allan is holding the finished product while his brothers hold the tools.



Fig. 2. In 1912 Allan Butler entered Princeton.



Fig. 3. Allan Butler as a business man.



Fig. 5. Allan Butler with the Cunard Steamship Co.—following World War I.



Fig. 4. Allan Butler while serving as 6th Field Artillery Officer.



Fig. 6. Allan Butler at the Rockefeller Institute.

The 1930's and 1940's marked the period during which his long and strong interest in chemistry and metabolism yielded a series of significant contributions in respect to the clinical measurement of sodium concentration, the early recognition of renal tubular acidosis, the use of potassium ion in the repair of dehydration, the chemical pathology of ascorbic acid deficiency, the treatment of rickets by means of citrates, the phenomenon of renal hypertension and, during World War II, the development of life raft rations for sailors and airmen wrecked at sea.

His talents and drives were not limited, however, to the pursuit of these highly acceptable and proper forms of academic endeavor, for he was among the first to recognize the need for better means of delivering and financing health care services. His interest in this subject was catalyzed by a series of discussions starting in 1928 and culminating in 1932 in the publication of the 'Report of the Committee on the Cost of Medical Care'. In recognition of his lively interest in this subject, he was made a member of the Legislative Committee of the Massachusetts Medical Society and, as a result of his work there and of his writing some communications in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, he got to know Dr. Robert Nigh, then Assistant Editor of the Journal, who, after becoming Editor-in-Chief, appointed Dr. Butler Associate Editor. In this capacity, Allan wrote a series of editorials. As you might guess, these were not exactly supportive of AMA policies. Indeed, the AMA not only complained to the Massachusetts Medical Society about these editorials, but also went so far as to demand that the Editor of the Journal be fired. Rather than be the cause of such an unhappy eventuality, Dr. Butler decided to drop out as Associate Editor. However, this did not by any means mark the end of his literary expositions on the subject, for it so happened that the Committee on Physicians For the Improvement of Medical Care came into being at about this time, and Allan wrote all the editorials and articles about this committee for the *New England Journal*.

In the years since, his contributions in these regards have continued to be of major national significance. He was one of the group which argued for the National Health Program against strong opposition at the National Health Conference held in 1938, and he has been a familiar figure on Capitol Hill, where he has appeared before most of the Congressional Committees considering medical legislation, the most recent topic being Medicare. Concerning the latter, he received a

personal message from President John F. Kennedy per Theodore Sorenson, then special consultant to the President. Under a White House letterhead dated September 14, 1961, it reads, 'The President has asked me to thank you for your testimony before the House Committee on Ways and Means in support of his bill for health insurance for the aged. The President believes health insurance for the aged through Social Security is an important and essential part of the program. He looks forward with your help, to the enactment of the legislation next year'.

I think we can see in the foregoing many substantial scientific and public welfare reasons for choosing Dr. Butler to be the Howland Award recipient for this year. There is, however, one more item that I would like to mention before closing. This has to do with the fact that he has the touch of a poet about him. The time remaining is just sufficient to permit me to read his first published work in the field. It was written in 1901, when he was 6 years old, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's passing, and it goes as follows:

'The Queen is dead
I am sad to say,
the Queen she
passed away today'

Boomerangs are not necessarily unpleasant. It so happens that Allan and Emmett Holt were the ones who proposed to Dave Cox a number of years ago that an award be established by means of which the American Pediatric Society might honor a very few of its most distinguished confreres. Emmett tells me that he had proposed that it be called the Jacoby Award, but Allan pointed out that the AMA had already taken this name over and suggested that it be called the Howland Award instead. It is my pleasure today, on behalf of the officers and members of the American Pediatric Society, to present to Allan himself the Howland Award as an expression of the high value that we place on his many and varied pioneering contributions to human welfare and to ourselves as a vital, effective and delightful companion-at-arms.

Reference and Note

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