

Howland Award Presentation to Robert E. Cooke¹

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First, a word about John Howland who was chairman at Hopkins from 1912 to 1926. His renown rests upon the establishment at Hopkins of the model of a full-time pediatric department whose faculty was expected to participate in laboratory research and have academic goals other than pediatric practice.

Bob Cooke graduated from both Yale College and Medical School, following which he was a house officer on Dr. Grover Powers' service at Yale. Dr. Powers (also a Howland awardee) was one of the consummate pediatricians of his era. He had a sensitivity and understanding of the sufferings of others that is little seen today. After 2 years of army service, Cooke returned to Yale as chief resident after which he was a postdoctoral fellow of Dr. Daniel Darrow (also a Howland awardee), the preeminent laboratory and clinical investigator of his time.

Cooke then spent 6 years on the pediatric faculty at Yale, during which he had an outstanding and eclectic laboratory research career, the main thrust of which was electrolyte metabolism. It also included studies of infant feeding, thyroid metabolism, renal disease, and cystic fibrosis. His bibliography now lists 169 citations. In recognition of these efforts, he was selected to be a Markle Scholar. During that period he was an energetic and superb clinician and a popular teacher. In 1956, when he was 36 years old, Dr. Cooke was invited to the Chair at Hopkins, where he remained for 17 years. Figure 1 shows Bob Cooke in his office at Yale appearing especially pleased. Perhaps the cranky flame photometer was working that day.

Space limitations do not permit me to describe his career after Hopkins, during which he was Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, President of the Medical College of Pennsylvania, and Chairman of Pediatrics at the State University of New York-Buffalo.

Upon arriving at Hopkins in 1956, Cooke found a distinguished but small faculty, which he rapidly enlarged. He engendered a scientific and intellectual atmosphere that attracted a group of talented medical students to his house staff, from which came a generation of leaders in American pediatrics.

One hundred and four of his house officers are now in academic medicine, 80 are professors, and of those 80, 22 are chairpersons. Others include many who have achieved national leadership positions in research administration, industry, and health care administration. Included in his accomplishments at Hopkins was construction of the Children's Medical Center, the Park outpatient building, and the Kennedy Institute.

Perhaps Cooke's greatest accomplishment was in his role as a national advocate for academic pediatrics and handicapped children. He was a member of President Kennedy's Transition Task Force on Health, a member of the President's Panel on Mental Retardation, Chairman of the National Steering Committee of The Head Start Program, and a member of National Commission for Protection of Human Subjects.

As a result of Cooke's influence, Public Law 88-164 was

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Fig. 1. Bob Cooke in his office at Yale (circa 1955).

recommended and enacted. It established Community Mental Health Centers, Centers for Research in Mental Retardation, and University Affiliated Facilities for the Mentally Retarded.

In 1961, at Cooke's urging, President Kennedy requested Congress to establish within the NIH an institute that we now know as the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

When the Clinical Research Center (CRC) program was established at the NIH in 1959, no provision was made for pediatric CRCs. It was Cooke who almost single-handedly rectified this omission through his influence in the Kennedy administration and Congress.

As a member of the National Commission for Protection of Human Subjects, Cooke was instrumental in developing ethical guidelines for research on children. His interests and efforts in bioethics and his role in The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation played a role in founding the Kennedy Bioethics Center at Georgetown.

Some of you may recognize this hard bench (Fig. 2), a relic of the Harriet Lane Home outpatient clinic, but I speak now of other hard benches, the sorrows of our personal lives, which, as Phyllis Theroux reminds us, we do not seek, but which are thrust upon us. Our awardee today has endured and overcome many such hard benches, testimony to his courage, intelligence, energy, and, above all, his human spirit.

We thank you, Bob, for establishing standards of clinical excellence; for demonstrating that pediatric departments must advance knowledge, not just preserve and transmit it; for having transformed public and professional attitudes toward the retarded; and for reminding us that children, as the most dependent persons in our society, require compensatory efforts and rights and that care, not cure, is a major part of medicine.

On behalf of all pediatricians and children, The American Pediatric Society is honored to present you with The John Howland Award.



Fig. 2. A Harriet Lane Home bench.



Fig. 3. Bob Cooke at work.