

Obituary

Robert Augustin Gardner 1892-1963

Robert Gardner was a distinguished and capable radiologist—more capable and more distinguished than we in Sydney knew, for he was a somewhat reticent man not given to self advertisement.

He graduated in Science at the University of Sydney in 1912 with Honours in both Physics and Chemistry, and accumulated three scholarships in these same subjects during the course. Continuing in Medicine, he obtained his M.B. degree in 1916 and after a brief period as Resident Medical Officer at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, like most medical graduates of this period, he was absorbed by the Army and served in the Australian Medical Corps with the Australian Navy and Military Force to New Guinea.

Returning, he took up residence at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and in 1920 was Senior Resident Radiologist under the late Herschell Harris and Molesworth. Thence he proceeded to England, and at Cambridge in 1921 obtained his Diploma in Medical Radiology and Electrorology, which, it should be noted, at that time included X-ray and radium therapy as well as X-ray diagnosis.

After serving under the late Dr. Finzi, he took an appointment with the Egyptian Government in Cairo in 1923 and remained there for some 14 years till 1937. During this period he was successively and progressively Lecturer, Assistant Professor in Radiology and Technical Adviser to the Egyptian Government. He was responsible for the organization and administration of the radiological department of the Kasr-El-Ainy Hospital, and in the 14 years of his service the diagnostic examinations rose from 1,600 per annum to 43,000, with commensurate modernization of the department.

On the therapeutic side, there rose a modern fully equipped department treating 800 patients per annum with both radium and X rays, and served by two wards totalling 43 beds, entirely

under the charge of the radiotherapist. This was 25 or more years ago, and we have not yet achieved equal accommodation for radiotherapy in any of our large teaching hospitals in Sydney.

It must then have seemed that Robert Gardner was in this elevated and responsible position for life, but it was not to be. In conformity with Government policy, he, with other Europeans, was compulsorily retired and replaced by an Egyptian national, being consoled with highly commendatory testimonials and an award as Commander of the Order of the Nile. This retirement must have been a considerable disappointment and frustration to him.

He returned to Sydney with more experience than any of his contemporaries in his own field, but unfortunately it was foreign experience, which in our somewhat insular community counted for much less than local lesser achievement and seniority.

He finally took up radiological practice at Chatswood and was appointed Honorary Assistant Radiotherapist at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, where I worked with him for many years.

He was a dedicated, meticulous radiologist, even at times a trifle pedantic, but a friendly and co-operative colleague with a high ethical and humane regard for his patients.

In 1946 fate struck him a severe blow. He underwent a total laryngectomy, and it is typical of the man that he was relatively unperturbed. Visiting him on the eve of the operation, his philosophical attitude was that "the ship either sinks or swims, and I can do nothing about it; so why worry".

In an incredibly few weeks he was back at work in the out-patient department, achieving a somewhat guttural speech which was quite intelligible and with which he finally achieved communication with his patients in spite of some initial difficulties.

He remained at work in the department till his retirement by age, and in private practice till his death, occasionally devoting some time to speech therapy for patients who had suffered the same deprivation as himself.

Personally he refused to admit defeat, and carried on with the greatest of fortitude for another 17 years till the absolute end. Such was his stubborn refusal that in the final issue on the way to the hospital, under continuous

oxygen, he stopped the ambulance in order that he might buy the morning paper!

Such was "Bob" Gardner, a dedicated and informed radiologist—a just, firm and friendly, self-contained character, always natural and always himself, without affectation or pose and always with a courage which I personally felt made him master of his own fate and an example to his colleagues and patients.

ERIC FRECKER.

Book Review

Pathological Monographs No. 2: The Pathology of Tumours of Children, by R. A. Willis. Copy from Rigby Ltd., 22 James Place, Adelaide.

The scope of this second of a series of pathological monographs is described by Professor Willis in his introductory paragraphs to Chapter 7, on Teratomas. "In the following outline of teratomas of children, attention will be focused on selected points of special clinical or pathological interest."

The book is not a textbook of all tumours met with in young patients. Rather it discusses interesting or rare conditions, and the amount of discussion depends mainly upon the interest felt by the author. Consequently, the book consists of detailed descriptions of several very rare tumours, well told and holding the interest of the reader throughout. In addition there is

a comprehensive description of the interesting features of the more common tumours. There are copious references through the text, and each chapter has its bibliography to guide the reader into more detailed study if that is required.

Written well, well produced and adequately illustrated with 80 figures through 195 pages, it shows well the fascination of pathology. Radiologists will be particularly provoked by the hamartoma theory of fibrous dysplasia, and by the opinion expressed on fibroma of bone, osteoid osteoma, chondromyxoid fibroma, benign chondroblastoma and benign osteoblastoma. All readers will enjoy the book and will be stimulated by the obvious thought behind the (occasionally controversial) opinions set down. It is highly recommended to those who are interested in pathology generally, and more particularly of the tumours of children.