

INVESTIGATIVE OPHTHALMOLOGY

Albert M. Potts

The trustees of the Association for Research in Ophthalmology have designated Albert M. Potts as the 1961 laureate for the Jonas S. Friedenwald Memorial Lectureship.

Albert Mintz Potts was born in Baltimore on June 8, 1914, 20 days before the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and the beginning of World War I. He was the son of Isaac and Leah Mintz Potts. Isaac Potts was an intellectual and an exceedingly versatile man, a graduate of The Johns Hopkins University, a college professor teaching chemistry, geology, botany, and German. He had the good fortune to live until 1960 and to enjoy with pride the achievement of his son Albert.

Albert Potts received his elementary schooling in Baltimore City College, and was chosen in high school for an accelerated program, which permitted him to complete work for his A.B. degree in chemistry at The Johns Hopkins University in 1934 at the age of 20 years. Not only did Dr. Potts achieve academic superiority, but he was an expert amateur photographer, belonged to the chess club, and acquired an enviable collection of chess sets of international origin.

Albert Potts married Esther Topkis of Wilmington, Delaware. Together they have enjoyed rearing three children—William, a student at Swarthmore, Leah, and Deborah.

In 1938, The University of Chicago granted Dr. Potts a Ph.D. degree in biochemistry, and from 1938 to 1942 he served as a research assistant in biochemistry.

From 1942 until 1944 he was research associate and instructor in biochemistry at the University of Chicago.

During World War II, Dr. Potts was chosen by the Manhattan Project to serve as biochemist in the metallurgic laboratory at the University of Chicago. He was assigned to the Department of Physiology, and, with Professor Ralph Gerard, studied gas warfare until 1945.

With this enviable experience with laboratory techniques, Dr. Potts matriculated in Western Reserve University School of Medicine, where he received the degree of doctor of medicine in 1948. It was in 1947 that I had the pleasure of making the personal acquaintance of Albert Potts, of apprising myself of his pleasant personality, his exceptional talents, and his profound knowledge of so large a basic body of facts. The resulting personal friendship and my admiration for his talent created an image untarnished through the ensuing years.

While matriculated in the medical school, Dr. Potts published research papers concerning the application of nuclear physics to biology and medicine, the use of radio-sodium for detection of small quantities of desoxycorticosterone, the production of radioactive aerosols, and the effect of thyroid secretory activity on the distribution of radioiodine in plasma.

Even the challenge of clinical ophthalmology during his residency could not distract the scientific mind of Dr. Potts from continuing problems in basic research. Dur-

anthropologic phenomena. It is reported to be a privilege to hear Dr. Potts discuss these subjects and to view his collection of artifacts which contain examples extending over forty centuries.

The accomplishments of Dr. Potts in the area of ophthalmic research are well known to all members of the Association for Research in Ophthalmology. Few have presented contributions so regularly or so capably at national and section meetings as Dr. Potts. Few have had the ability to direct research over so wide an area, or to discuss papers of other essayists with so great a comprehension of the unspoken inferences.

In 1954, when I had the pleasure of informing Jonas S. Friedenwald of the desire

of the Association that he serve as trustee, I received a reply stating that, although he was attempting to relieve himself of as many obligations as possible, he was honored by the invitation and would make every effort to be of all possible service to the Association for Research in Ophthalmology. It is my belief that, if Jonas S. Friedenwald had been one of the trustees at the time of the designation of Albert M. Potts for this honor, the qualifications of Dr. Potts are such that Jonas Friedenwald would have been the first to have made this nomination.

I am deeply honored to have been invited to present Albert M. Potts to the Mid-Winter National Meeting on this occasion.

Lorand V. Johnson

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ing his residency, he published papers on the transport of protein in ocular structures, the nutritional supply of corneal regions in experimental animals, the mechanism of foreign protein therapy, the distribution and fate of cadmium in the animal body, the effect of osmotic strength on penetration of the anterior corneal surface by labeled inorganic ions, and the inhibition of retinal metabolism by methanol and its oxidation products.

Only once, and that upon the completion of his residency in ophthalmology, was I aware of a temptation of his to forsake ophthalmic research, and this tempting proposal was the offer of a professorship in radioactive medicine from an outstanding medical school.

It was fortunate for ophthalmic research that in 1951 Congress passed the National Institutes of Health Bill, and the information was available to Dr. Potts that it was expected that the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness might have at least one million dollars for research grants in 1952. Optimism concerning the availability of some research money rather than local assurance of laboratory facilities allowed Dr. Potts to dedicate his talents to research for the prevention of blindness.

Dr. Potts' acceptance of a full-time staff appointment at Western Reserve University School of Medicine and the University Hospitals of Cleveland with the title of Assistant Professor in Ophthalmic Research immediately presented the problem of allocation of time and conservation of effort. A man with such versatile abilities, with so profound a knowledge of basic sciences, skilled in ophthalmic surgery and in ophthalmic diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, was, as expected, immediately beset with requests for teaching from the medical school, the school of nursing, for seminar presentations, and customary clinical assistance, such as in the health clinic and the outpatient department. The enviable list of papers published under his direction and supervision attests to the

wisdom of protecting himself from all activities that could be assigned to other staff members.

It was with the comment, "one institution's gain, another institution's loss," that I congratulated Dr. Potts upon his appointment as Professor in Ophthalmology and Director of Research in Ophthalmology at the University of Chicago, where, we concurred, humanity would profit by his better facilities for greater research potential.

Dr. Potts appears to be in an occupation in which he enjoys every minute of every day, for medical teaching, medical practice, and the conduct of research are three things which he enjoys intensely. Thus, his hobbies, such as chess playing or jewelry making or the study of ancient coins, are not a refuge from his daily work as they are in the case of many, but are simply another, different interest.

Although primarily interested in ophthalmic research, Dr. Potts maintains active participation in societies, such as the Association for Research in Ophthalmology, the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology, the American Chemical Society, the American Society of Biological Chemists, the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Association of University Professors, and the Society of Medical History of Chicago. He has served as Associate Editor of the *Archives of Ophthalmology*, as a member of the Editorial Board of INVESTIGATIVE OPHTHALMOLOGY, and has written annual reviews of articles for the *Archives of Ophthalmology* for the years 1959, 1960, and 1961. He has also served on special committees—the National Institutes of Health, Sensory Diseases Study Section; the National Academy of Sciences, Committee on Vision; and the American Board of Ophthalmology, Examiner.

Among the intellectual resources that might be inapparent to his scientific associates is an interest in the significance of the eye and its symbols in the mystic and mythologic lore, and in the psychiatric and

anthropologic phenomena. It is reported to be a privilege to hear Dr. Potts discuss these subjects and to view his collection of artifacts which contain examples extending over forty centuries.

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