OBITUARY
ISAAC ARTHUR ABT—1867-1955

This is not only an obituary; it is the saga of an era of medicine, of which one of the last great Oaks was Isaac A. Abt.

The parents of Isaac A. Abt were Levi and Henrietta Hart Abt. They migrated to this country from Germany shortly after the unrestful period of 1848.

Upon his arrival in this country at the age of 19 years, Levi Abt with his mother made his way, through the aid of friends, to Illinois and set out with a pack on his back peddling from farm house to farm house with zeal and energy. In point of time it was about 20 years after Chicago was incorporated as a municipality. Soon he had saved enough to purchase a general store and became U.S. Postmaster at Wheeling, Illinois, a small hamlet 24 miles northwest of Chicago. Soon he courted and wed Henrietta Hart who lived in the vicinity with her parents, brother and sisters. The Harts were also migrants from the Rhine Valley of Germany.

Two sons were born at Wheeling and the family then removed to Wilmington, Illinois, on the banks of the Kankakee River where Levi Abt ran a general store.

Here on December 18, 1867 twin boys were born and named Isaac and Jacob; in time, only two years after the tragic death of Abraham Lincoln. The twins grew and prospered, but Wilmington on the swampy river shore was malarious, so that shortly after the tragic Chicago fire set off by Mrs. O'Leary's cow, the family moved from the country to Chicago in the year 1875. Here Levi Abt joined with his brothers-in-law and the firm of Hart, Abt and Marx was established for the manufacture of men's clothing. In Chicago three daughters were born to the family making a total of four brothers and three sisters.

The Abt children attended the public schools of Chicago. The twins were particularly adept at their school work. One of his teachers, Ella Flagg Young, made a lasting impression on young Isaac. She later was promoted to be Superintendent of Schools of Chicago. The male schoolmates of the young Abt boys were of the rough and tumble type, and whether he himself or a brother was involved, Isaac Abt seems to have been the principal defender of the Abt brothers.

Soon after the two older brothers, Solomon and Herman, had graduated from high school and had worked for a time at Hart, Abt and Marx, it was decided that the family futures would be best served if the brothers-in-law separated. So the firms of L. Abt & Sons, and Hart, Schaffner and Marx, the present famous clothing manufacturers, were formed.

During his earlier schoolboy days Isaac Abt did many of the chores for his mother about the house. Whenever sickness occurred he was dispatched to fetch the Family Doctor or Aunt Rose depending on...
the severity of the illness. Aunt Rose was naturally gifted and versed in the care of the sick and ill and performed many of the duties of the sick room in those days. Isaac was dispatched on these missions because he was the most agile of the brothers and the most liable to get through and bring the needed help.

During his high school days Isaac Abt worked in the drug store of Matt Borland on the west side of Chicago near his home. This experience, combined with his being family messenger for the sick, destined him to seek a course in medicine.

By the time the twins were graduating from high school, it was decided that Isaac should attend the new Johns Hopkins University for premedical biologic sciences and that Jacob would attend Yale University.

Both spent a preliminary time in preparation at the predecessor of the University of Chicago, the University Academy. In the fall of 1886 the Abt twins departed Chicago, one for Yale University at New Haven and the other for The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Isaac Abt avidly absorbed biologic knowledge at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. He boarded at 225 East Biddle Street with Mrs. Warfield, aunt of the Duchess of Windsor. He studied with some of the outstanding teachers of the period: Ira Remsen in Chemistry; Brooks in Zoology; G. Stanley Hall in Psychology and a host of others. Later he attended ward rounds with William Osler at the newly opened Johns Hopkins Hospital* and he came under the pathologic teachings of William Howard Welch, an influence which left a lasting impression upon his whole future life and career. Welch's classic papers on thrombosis and embolism he knew well throughout his life. Welch's views on the basic phenomenon of inflammation, healing processes and others were a firm part of his foundation of medical knowledge. Nothing could be more fundamental or more vital. These corner stones were solidly laid.

As an example of his relationships with Welch the following anecdote is related: An early patient in his practice was an ailing pet bird a neighboring woman demanded he cure. Dr. Abt's skill failed the bird, but he requested the carcass, wrapped it meticulously in cotton and sent it to "Popsy" Welch with a carefully written protocol. After a long interval Dr. Abt received a most complete and detailed report from Dr. Welch in Baltimore together with a box of expertly stained slides complete with a full lengthy discussion written in longhand of all the possibilities which might have caused the illness and death of the pet bird.

It was while he was a student at Baltimore that the youngest sister, May, developed diphtheria, supposedly from a pet cat and died. He never forgot the disease transmitting possibilities of the cat for the human.

Among his classmates were Ross Harrison, distinguished Professor of Cytology at Yale University, still surviving; Fielding Garrison, famous librarian of the Army Medical Museum, and the country's outstanding medical historian who wrote the chapter on the History of Pediatrics in the later produced Abt's System of Pediatrics; Lessing Rosenthal, a cousin, a distinguished jurist and member of the Bar of Chicago and a life-long friend; Arthur Patek, a distinguished internist of Milwaukee; and Albert Loeb, counsel and Vice-President and one of the original organizers and founders of Sears, Roebuck & Company. Having spent 3 years at Johns Hopkins, 1886-1887, 1887-1888 and 1888-1889, Isaac Abt entered the Chicago Medical College then the Medical Department of Northwestern University in the fall of 1889. This was a privately run school founded by Nathan Davis, Hosmer Johnson and others. One of the young instructors was Frank Billings, a name later of the first magnitude in American medicine and the middle west.

In the summertime when not attending

* Officially opened May 7, 1889. The sixty-sixth anniversary of the opening of the hospital doors was celebrated in May 1955. The hospital was partially open prior to this date.
Medical School, he “walked” with Dr. Willys Andrews, Sr., an early Chicago astute Scotch physician and surgeon. In the summer evenings they would visit patients to change dressings and occasionally operate on a patient whom they had been following. Isaac Abt carried Dr. Andrews’ large medical bags, and for operations prepared the kitchen (operating) table and instruments, gave the anesthetic or held the patient and in general was useful and helpful to his preceptor, Dr. Andrews. About this time, the next youngest Abt sister, Carrie, developed appendicitis and was treated medically with hot and cold fomentations. There was no appendectomy operation at this time.

After 2 years of lectures the Class of 1891 graduated.

For the next year he was an intern at Michael Reese Hospital, and with Charles H. Piper, the other intern, he bathed the typhoid patients, assisted in surgery and performed prodigious and multitudinous duties; needless to say, not on an 8-hour schedule.

Now most of the members of the Class of 1891 prepared for postgraduate training in the great medical centers abroad. Among his classmates who accompanied him abroad were Joseph Bolivar Delee, interested in diseases of woman and child birth; Arthur Edwards, a brilliant student of internal medicine, later Dean of Northwestern University Medical School; Daniel Eisen- drath, who was to devote himself to the study of surgery; and Robert Preble, another brilliant student of internal medicine.

In the fall of 1892 these young students sailed for Europe and 2 full years of intensive study in the famed medical clinics of the continent. Dr. Abt studied with many of the famous clinicians and pathologists of Austria, Herman Widerhofer, Theodor Escherich, Alois Monti and in Germany, in particular with Professor Otto Heubner, one of the pioneers of pediatrics, and wound up in England in the early winter of 1893, after having called on his father's and mother’s remaining relatives in the Rhine country between Wiesbaden and Coblenz. Having spent more money than he had intended, his last few days in London before sailing were passed on a low-calorie diet.

On his return to Chicago in early 1894 he aligned himself as a teacher of histology and physiology at the University Women's Medical College and later at Northwestern University Medical School when this was formed from the Chicago Medical College, University Women’s Medical College, etc. He commenced to practice internal medicine with an eye to specializing in diseases of infancy and childhood (pediatrics) and his earliest office was in the neighborhood of 35th Street and Indiana Avenue.

After he joined the staff of Northwestern University Medical School, he continued for a time to conduct a class in physiology. Once after finishing a course, a student visited him and complained that he had only received a grade of 98; why hadn't he received 100? Dr. Abt assured him that as the teacher of the course he spent 6 to 8 hours the preceding night preparing his lecture for the course. He was sure the student had spent no such equivalent time. Therefore, he always reserved the 100 mark for himself or any student who could prove he had spent an equivalent time in preparation.

In 1897 he married Lina Rosenberg, a young graduate nurse of Michael Reese Hospital. Their first born appeared on the 7th of September in 1898. At this time the family lived on Grand Boulevard in the second floor apartment above his Johns Hopkins classmate, Albert Loeb, a promising young lawyer, later Vice-President of Sears, Roebuck & Company.

About this time it was announced that Civil Service Examinations would be held for attending physicians at Cook County Hospital. They were the first of this series of examinations. Dr. Abt took his books in suitcases to a room in the Lakota Hotel, locked himself in for nearly a week and took the examination. He won first place with probably the highest mark ever attained in these examinations and thus began a long and profitable relationship with Cook County Hospital. The Abt family
moved eastward to Vincennes Avenue in 1901 and here the second born saw the light of day. Dr. Abt had his offices arranged in an English basement with a separate entrance, and a large brass sign pointed the way to the entrance. Between calls and office, and duties at Michael Reese and Cook County Hospital, he spent a busy life. In this early period he kept several horses, buggies, carriages and sleds in a nearby livery stable. At this time he adopted the wearing of congress boots so he had no laces to tie, and at night arranged his clothes in the manner of a fireman. When appraised of a night emergency, he dispatched the messenger to the livery stable to start the harnessing of his horse. Then he jumped into his clothes, pulled on his congress boots and dashed to the livery stable to finish the harnessing and dash pellmell through the night to be the first doctor on the scene, as usually a number of messengers were dispatched and the first doctor to arrive had charge of the case.

Later with the advent of the telephone and the automobile, this rigorous routine fell into disuse, but he never throughout his 87 years, gave up his congress boots. Much could be written of the early trials and tribulations of the automobile. The first, the Autocar; then the Holsman with buggy wheels; chain-drive Buick, with always the weak link causing a breakdown; Stanley Steamer, a fast vehicle, but limited to the old horse fountains for water for the boiler; the Carter Car with planetary gears; the Willys with sleeveless valves; finally a Reo and the Hupmobiles and on to modern times. Often in the early days the schedule of calls was disrupted if the car broke down or caught fire, and the horse and buggy would again carry the brunt of the work.

In his early days of practice, Dr. Abt served as county physician and as an inspector for the Chicago Health Department. In his health work in the county, he would catch a freight train to a neighboring county community to perform vaccinations against smallpox or other public health duties. Sometimes resistance to vaccination was encountered and then the Sheriff or local constabulary were requested to help enforce the health laws.

About 1908 he was offered the Chair of Pediatrics at Rush Medical College which he held for approximately a year, returning to Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at Northwestern University Medical School in 1909, a position he held for 30 years until 1939.

In 1909 Dr. Abt helped to organize and found the first Chicago Milk Commission, modeled on the plan of the philanthropist, Nathan Strauss of New York City. In this work he was aided by a young lawyer with whom he had officed in the early days of this practice, Lucius Teter, and from this beginning the Infant Welfare Society of Chicago was founded.

Dr. Abt contributed a long bibliography of articles on varied subjects to the Pediatric literature. His written contributions embrace every phase of child health. Early in his career he translated the German edition of R. Hecker and J. Trumpp's Atlas and Epitome of Diseases of Children into English. In 1906, chapters on "Tuberculosis and Typhoid Fever" were contributed by him to the Practice of Pediatrics edited by Walter Carr, and in 1913 he contributed a chapter on "Rachitis" to Forcheimer's Therapeutics of Internal Medicine. In 1919 he contributed a section on "Milk in its Relation to Infant Feeding" to Heinemann's book on Milk, and in 1930 he wrote a treatise on the "Morbidity and Mortality of Tuberculosis in the United States," for Engle and Pirquet's Handbuch der Kindertuberkulose. He was the editor of the Yearbook of Pediatrics for 40 years, from 1906 through 1946.

In 1910 Edward Morris of the family of Chicago meat packers came to him with the desire to donate a sum for the creation of a children's hospital in honor of Sarah Morris, the mother of the donors. Dr. and Mrs. Abt took off for Europe in the late summer of 1910, and he visited all of the recently constructed children's hospitals and centers and returned with plans
for a modern children's hospital and center. The plans were drawn by the firm of Schmidt, Gardner and Erickson and the first children's hospital in Chicago, the Sarah Morris Children's Hospital, was erected in conjunction with Michael Reese Hospital. It was acknowledged as the finest institution of its kind in the United States, equal to the Harriet Lane Home of The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, which was planned by Clemens von Pirquet, and erected at nearly the same period.

In 1914 Dr. Abt and the family set off in July for Europe. He wished to study extensively with Professor Heinrich Finkelstein in Berlin, and to contact authors for chapters in his System of Pediatrics, the Syllabus of which he had already completed. Among the considerable baggage accompanying the family was a specially constructed trunk full of medical books, and built with a guarantee to contain them, come what may.

The family landed at Hamburg, though the ship visited Plymouth, England and encountered a group of British warships. On proceeding to Berlin, Dr. Abt was established with his trunk of books in a family hotel on the Kurfurstendam, and the boys, then 15 and 13 were dispatched to a camp in Silesia. All went well until near the end of July when world startling events occurred in Sarajevo, Serbia. The camp was quickly evacuated and the family reunited in Berlin. There the Kaiser's messenger drove around in an open carriage in full dress regalia, reading a proclamation of War. The family retreated to England via Holland and a few unusual experiences occurred, notable of which was the stopping of the train at a small city during the middle of the night. Weary passengers were crowded in the aisles, the Abt family near the vestibule of a car in which they had thought to have had first-class seats. The door to the vestibule was pulled open and a bulky Naval Reservist was pushing his sea bag before him and forcing his way in. Dr. Abt mildly remonstrated, "Aber es ist unmöglich." The German Navy man retorted, "Mein Herr, im Krieg ist nichts unmöglich," and accomplished his mission by wedging in after his sea bag and down the aisle of the train.

In England, after a month of passages obtained and then diverted by the ship being taken off for a troop carrier, the family finally sailed in early September on the Cunarder, Andania, bound for Boston. Her steerage was converted to one-class accommodations and she seemed to sail as much north as west. One night she lay to, to shake off a submarine. A few nights later she again lay to, and passengers venturing on deck were chilled by the cold and awed by the floating icebergs and ice packs in the vicinity. Finally after a rough passage through the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Quebec City was visited and the weary travellers debarked at Montreal.

During the next years, work on Abt's System of Pediatrics was of necessity suspended. Clinical work took most of his time, although during this period a Dr. Simon from Saunders in Philadelphia frequently appeared for Sunday noon dinners, which were usually sumptuous, and which he seemed to enjoy greatly. The purpose of his visit, besides the social and gustatory parts, was to collect clinics for Saunders' new Chicago Clinics, later Clinics of North America. In 1917 a book entitled, The Baby's Food, appeared. This contained all of the complicated recipes of the period, from Ruhrah's soybean soup to the more complicated German preparations.

In 1920 he visited the west coast, giving some talks at Tacoma, Washington. Here he had a reunion with some of his most treasured friends in medicine, Henry Dietrich in Los Angeles whom he had advised to give up work as a mining camp physician to specialize in pediatrics and locate in Los Angeles. All Chicago patients visiting Los Angeles for many years were automatically referred to the care of Henry Dietrich. In San Francisco he visited with E. Charles Fleischner, who was working on poliomyelitis and contagious diseases. There was also a pleasant visit with the Langley
Porter family in San Francisco; in Portland with Joseph Bilderbach; and in Seattle with Jay Scott Durand. The renewal of friendships was even more impressive than the scenery encountered on this trip, which included Lake Louise and Banff on the return.

From 1919 to 1935 Dr. Abt was the member of the House of Delegates of the A.M.A. for the Section on Diseases of Children. He now resumed the task of gathering articles for the completion of his System of Pediatrics and he served as chairman of a committee to investigate the methods of sale and promotion of propriety infant foods. He also served on a committee to investigate the inhalation of zinc stearate and other noxious products used in the manufacture of diaper and baby powders and reported fully on foreign body pneumonias caused by zinc and other agents.

Dr. Abt was president of the local medical societies as the Chicago Medical, Chicago Pediatric, and the Institute of Medicine of Chicago for which he prepared an exhaustive account on the “Treatment of Whooping Cough” as his presidential address. In 1911-1912 he was Chairman of the Section on Diseases of Children of the A.M.A.; in 1926 he was the President of the American Pediatric Society and presented as his presidential address a scholarly review on “The Influence of Pathology on Pediatrics.” This meeting was highlighted by a pleasant cruise on Chesapeake Bay, the meetings winding up at the Chevalier Hotel at Virginia Beach, Virginia.

In 1927 he was made an honorary member of the Minnesota Chapter of Alpha Omega Alpha and wore the watch charm of this chapter continuously the remainder of his life. In 1927 he was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor of France. In 1928 on a visit to Europe he was made a honorary member of the German Pediatric Society, an honor shared only by one other American, Alfred Hess of New York, who simultaneously received the honor. In 1933 he became the first President of the American Academy of Pediatrics, a society he was most influential in helping to found. Prior to this he had been a most active member of the Central States Pediatric Society, a predecessor of the Academy.

He was an active member and President of the American Association of Teachers of Diseases of Children. For his presidential address he polled his senior class with a questionnaire on the students' reactions to the teaching of pediatrics. In the replies to this questionnaire, as can be imagined, he drew some gems which he incorporated in a most interesting address.

In 1923 and 1924 his monumental System of Pediatrics appeared. It was heralded throughout the world, and influential European clinics and pediatric departments begged for copies of Abt's System. Many of the articles contained therein are still classics in the field, even with the great advances of the past 30 years.

In 1925 Dr. Abt left Michael Reese where he had interned and Sarah Morris which he had built, and attached himself for a time to the staff of St. Luke’s Hospital. Later for a very happy 10 years, he taught his Northwestern students pediatrics at the Children’s Memorial Hospital, of which his contemporary and friend, Joseph Brenneman was the Director. During this period the medical students at Northwestern probably received the finest clinical pediatric training in the country through the teachings and clinics of Abt and Brenneman.

Among his other accomplishments Dr. Abt was credited with being the first physician in Chicago and probably the middle west to administer von Bering's diphtheria antitoxin. He brought Finkelstein’s Protein Milk Formula and Dextrimaltose Sugar back with him from his trip abroad in 1910. The curds were ground, the whey filtered off and the skimmed buttermilk added, just as the Finkelstein formula for protein milk stated. He urged the firm of Mead Johnson to manufacture Dextrimaltose Sugar after the Racine, Wisconsin, Malted Milk people had turned him down. In an early survey by the American Pediatric Society, he collected cases of scurvy in infants in Chicago and his first clinical reports were painstaking analyses of ty-
phoid fever in infants and children in Chicago, which are the basis for his chapters on typhoid and paratyphoid fevers in Brenneman's *System of Pediatrics*.

When he was preparing the chapter on the History of Pediatrics for Brenneman's *System*, he had shipped to his country home in Leland, Michigan, several trunks of books. The year before he had built a new equipment shed, and here he stored some furniture from the home he had given up on Kenwood Avenue. It was cool in the summer mornings in this shed, and here he had deposited the trunks of books and with the aid of a high school English teacher, whom he found and enlisted, he wrote the chapter on the History of Pediatrics.

In the mid-1920's with the aid of a mechanical engineer, Edward Lasker, he invented and perfected a human breast pump. The idea he originally obtained from a visit to Senator and Mrs. McCormick's certified milk farm at Rockford, Illinois.

This account would not be complete without relating some of the anecdotes which grew up around him.

In the early days he once brought his great and dear friend, Joseph Bolivar Delee home for supper unannounced. His friend Joe raved at the fine cut of steak. Dr. Abt chewed unsuccessfully and unrewardingly on his. When Delee had left, he asked his dear wife the reason for Delee's enthusiasm and his own disgust. The answer was that bringing in an unannounced guest had resulted in the guest receiving his tender portion and he receiving the rind. Thereafter, he always made sure to call well in advance before bringing home a friend or guest.

In the office he was often consulted about an inferior child. A favorite explanation was a comparison with a suit of clothes. It all depended on the original material employed. Several times male parents accompanied their small male offspring to the office, complaining of the meagerness of their genitalia. Dr. Abt would assure them of the adequateness of the member for its intended usage. "Of course," he would say, "if you want him to use it for a buggy whip, it won't do." At such times it was hard to keep a straight face in the office.

He had a keen olfactory sense. Once I arrived in the office and he sent for me immediately. "Don't take your coat off, meet Professor Blank from Central America. Take him out and show him Chicago Pediatrics and don't bother to come back; I will handle the office myself." Next day I asked him, "How come?" "Oh," he said, "that fellow had a musty odor; I thought if you had him outside, you wouldn't mind it too much."

A young physician called during the year of the depression to ask advice. He had been invited to become a medical member of a pay clinic which advertised, at an attractive salary. Needless to say, the clinic was under the fire of local and national medical societies. Dr. Abt told the young physician: "Why Ernie, if you joined that group it would be like a young girl fresh from the country coming to town and entering a house of ill repute." Ernie joined, but he never forgot the advice, and told the story many times on himself.

During the late 1930's refugee physicians literally swamped the office. How we managed to see the patients and pay the overhead was often a mystery, as Dr. Abt was head of a committee to help refugee physicians in Chicago and when New York and the east coast filled up, the middle west seemed to be their goal.

He had many favorite stories which he loved to retell. One concerned a purported fire chief by the name of Benny Bullwinkel he claimed to have once met in Manistee, Michigan. Bullwinkel's aim in life was to die with his boots on. Dr. Abt claimed to have a similar ambition. Then in summer he revived the story entitled, "Never eat sausage in the summertime." This was good for an afternoon of fishing on a session in easy chairs on the porch and at least 2 good cigars. John Ruhrah, who for a period visited him each summer at Leland, Michigan, was yearly afflicted with this story, even though he protested he had previously heard it. Dr. Abt felt that John might have forgotten some of the finer points.
In 1935 he purchased a farm across the lake from his summer cottage. For 10 years he was a devoted farmer. He joined a Gentlemen Farmers' Club in Chicago, whose luncheon meetings he religiously attended. The library increased with books on Animal Husbandry, Diseases of Animals and pamphlets from the various agricultural schools and universities. He attended refresher short courses for farmers at East Lansing, Michigan, grew chummy with the county agent, refurbished the barns and silos, and built a tool shed and bull pen. He bought a blooded bull and improved his own stock as well as the neighbors. When his cherries did well and graded near the top at the cannery, every cherry tree in the U.S.A. had produced, and the prices handily paid for the spray; the same with the pigs and other farm crops and products. His best cash crop was the cream check from the Co-op Creamery, though the cherry and peach trees he planted flourished, as did the alfalfa and corn. He increased the fertility of the soil, much of which was sand or sandy loam. I once mentioned that the view of 2 lakes from the top of the hill on the farm was the most scenic and interesting part of the whole thing. He agreed that he liked the scenery too, but he wished to improve the land. In spring, summer and fall when he could be on the farm on visits and keep an eye on the tenant farmer all was fine, but from November through March, 300 miles away, the tenant usually rested or cut a little fire wood.

In 1945 he received an offer and sold the farm, without, I believe, too much regret. For several summers after that he spent a few weeks in a converted country school house which he had purchased across the road from the farm, and enjoyed watching the new owner struggle with the problems.

In the late 1930's he was asked to prepare a History of Pediatrics for the Paul Hoeber Cleo Medica Series. He spent nearly a year in the careful preparation of this manuscript and in late spring mailed it to the editor in Philadelphia. In a few weeks it was returned with a brief note suggesting that while the material was accurate, it was rather dull reading; couldn't the history be enlivened with anecdotes and the text generally jazzed up?

“What are you going to do, Dad,” I asked, feeling myself like jumping on a train to Philadelphia and punching the fellow in the nose. “Nothing,” he said, placed the manuscript on the shelf of a bookcase, and that was the end of that.

Once we were returning in his car from a meeting of the Chicago Pediatric Society. A supposed expert had given a bombastic paper and Dr. Abraham Levinson who was getting a ride asked Dr. Abt: “How could an apparently smart fellow like that make such a fool of himself?” Dr. Abt answered him: “Abe, don’t you remember that the higher the monkey climbs the pole, the more he exposes of his posteriors?” This made a profound impression on all present.

Once early in my professional association with him, I asked if he didn’t think that with some encouragement a certain young doctor couldn’t do some good research and make a name for himself. He thought a little and then said: “Yes, perhaps he could be encouraged to go through with a specific experiment, but,” Dr. Abt continued, “what makes a great man in medicine? Not surely external encouragement. This is an individual matter in my opinion,” he said, “greatness, endeavor, research desire and ability all come from a common source—The Fire That Burns From Within—without this there is no genius, no progress, just routine endeavor and normalcy.”

How often have I thought as I grew older, watched my elders, then my contemporaries, lately my juniors, how few have The Fire That Burns From Within. Some have it until they land a professorial job. Then what happens? Do they extinguish it, or does it die out? They complain of being overwhelmed by administrative duties. However, a good hot inward Fire couldn’t really be quenched so easily. I often wish to go up to them at meetings and ask what happened to put out the inward Fire. Perhaps this is too intimate an interrogation?
I think of the future. How can the 8-hour resident or intern keep the Fire burning once it has ignited, on an 8-hour, my night in, or on call basis. This makes for happy home life, but is genius supposed to be happy except when doing what the inward Fire directs in solving a problem, or involved in vital research?

In the soul of Isaac Abt there burned this vital Fire. His whole love of life and his great interest above all else was his medicine. He wrote and studied prodigiously of the many clinical problems he encountered; he investigated the use of cathartic drugs on the infant's kidney; he studied intelligence in relation to the onset of speech; he encouraged his friend, the surgeon Alfred Strauss, to perfect a simple operation for the relief and repair of congenital hypertrophic pyloric stenosis, where all before who were subjected to gastro-entero-anastomoses died; he was a twin himself and studied extensively the phenomena of twinning and the clinical implications. Mechanically he encouraged the use and development of the incubator and the breast pump. In later years he found great interest in the history of medicine and pediatrics. In 1944 he published his autobiography, *The Baby Doctor*, which was translated into Spanish. He had a great feeling for the younger doctor and younger people in general, and to the end many consulted him and were wisely guided in their problems. At meetings and in all public places he was consulted by contemporary and young alike on their personal problems.

He outlived the great majority of all contemporaries and at one of the last public dinners he attended in his honor, he was called on for some remarks. He made the proper acknowledgments and then went on to say as he looked about how really lonely he was beginning to feel. All present were considerably younger and he was approaching the last of his generation. He read from Oliver Wendell Holmes:

> "And if I should live to be
> The last leaf upon the tree
> In the Spring"

Let them smile as I do now
At the old forsaken bow
Where I cling."

With all the honors that came to him he never lost his sense of humility. He was to a degree shy of strangers, though he had a great humor and at the sick bed a great sense of responsibility, a sureness and a skill which immediately imbued the worried parent with confidence and hope. He had many little philosophic sayings which soothed and gave hope. To the distraught American-Chinese grandfather spokesman he said, "Hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst."

Thus, at the end, after a summer of anginal attacks, paroxysmal auricular fibrillation, a weakened myocardium failed to respond after a nap, the afternoon of November 22, 1955. On this same date, November 22, 1922, his father had passed on before him. Isaac Abt was within 3½ weeks of his eighty-eighth birthday. On that November afternoon, when his heart failed to further beat, The Fire That Burned From Within was extinguished.

What can we hope of the future? Will such as he be born again and carry the Fire That Burns From Within for 88 summers and winters? What answer shall we have?

His Medical Honors, Diplomas and Medals are at the Northwestern University Medical School Library, according to his wish.

His Jacobiana and medical books are in the Joseph Brenneman Library of Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

The prototype of the Human Breast Pump is in the Department of Pediatrics, at The University of Illinois Medical School.

Isaac A. Abt stands with Jacobi, Griffith, Holt, Morse, Howland, Brenneman and Blackfan in American pediatrics. He was the last of the Great White Knights of American Pediatrics. The Fire That Burned From Within was never extinguished. It left his body with his mortal soul.

ARTHUR F. ABT, M.D.
OBITUARY: ISAAC ARTHUR ABT—1867-1955
ARTHUR F. ABT
*Pediatrics* 1956;18:327

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OBITUARY: ISAAC ARTHUR ABT—1867-1955
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Pediatrics 1956;18;327

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