

## AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

### PRESENTATION OF THE BRET RATNER MEMORIAL AWARD TO LEWIS WEBB HILL

Annual Meeting, American Academy of Pediatrics, October 24, 1965

*EDITOR'S NOTE: At the 1965 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Pediatrics, the Section on Allergy presented its Bret Ratner Memorial Lecture Award to Doctor Lewis Webb Hill. Dr. Sheldon C. Siegel, in introductory remarks, described the award as a memorial to the late Dr. Ratner, a founder of this Section of the Academy and a distinguished pioneer in the field of pediatric allergy. The recipient of the award, selected for outstanding contributions to the same field, is expected to present a lecture based on his endeavors, but because of illness, Dr. Hill was unable to be present. Dr. Siegel therefore called upon Dr. Harry L. Mueller, a close associate of Dr. Hill and himself a recognized contributor to pediatric allergy, to accept the Ratner Memorial Gold Medal on Dr. Hill's behalf. Besides commenting from long association upon Dr. Hill's notable career (and even more notable personality), Dr. Mueller read from Dr. Hill's own notes prepared for the occasion. We are happy to share these Proceedings with our readers.*

DOCTOR SIEGAL, members and guests of the Section on Allergy: I accept the Bret Ratner Memorial Medal for Doctor Hill and convey his pleasure and thanks to the Section and the Academy for this honor you have bestowed upon him. It has been my great privilege to have worked under Lewis Webb Hill and to have assisted him for a number of years with seminars and round tables at Academy meetings in many places.

No matter where or what the meeting, Doctor Hill left a lasting impression on his audiences. There was always that quality of plain straightforward presentation in clear, concise and unpretentious English that made him such a great teacher. Some of you here will remember that his popularity became so great that when notices were sent out for Academy seminars in allergy to be given by Doctor Hill, they were oversubscribed by telegram. Another incident that stands out in my memory as a testimonial to his attraction as a speaker was some 10 years ago when he was guest lecturer at the annual meeting of the Dermatologists here at the Palmer House. Doctor Hill arrived about 30 minutes before his scheduled appearance and slipped into the

back of the main ballroom where the meeting was going on. Seeing only a scattering of people in the huge room, it occurred to him that it hardly seemed worthwhile to come all that distance to speak to a handful. To his amazement, when he was introduced a half hour later, the ballroom was filled.

Among Lewis Hill's many great qualities are a sincerity and a desire to learn, unmatched by his most eager students. Doctor Louis Diamond tells a story of Doctor Hill as "The Visit" when Dr. Diamond was a house officer. A difference of opinion arose over the treatment of a patient and Doctor Hill proceeded to do a chest tap himself to demonstrate its need. When a dry tap resulted, as Doctor Diamond predicted, Doctor Hill turned and praised Doctor Diamond in front of staff and nurses with the remark, "When I'm not able to learn, I don't deserve to be here."

When Doctor Hill decided that he should not make the trip to Chicago for this meeting and I was asked to be his stand-in for the presentation of the Bret Ratner Memorial Award, I asked him to set down a few things about himself from which I could construct an acceptance speech.

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After reading his notes, I was confident that I could say nothing in my own words that would approximate the style and content of any response by Doctor Hill himself, and, consequently, I am going to read those words as he wrote them as the memorable part of this acceptance speech.

Lewis Webb Hill was born in 1889 in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, a part of Boston which in earlier days was a country village. His forbears on both sides were of early New England stock from Salem, New Bedford, Nantucket, and Newport. His great-grandfather, Charles Hill, was a Salem sea captain, and later merchant, and moved to Boston in 1830 when Salem Harbor proved to be too shallow to accommodate the larger ships that were being built at that time. He built a house in Jamaica Plain on land that was part of the country estate of Dr. John Collins Warren who did the first ether operation, at the Massachusetts General Hospital.

Lewis Hill still lives in the same house in which he was brought up as a child. It is the fourth house that was built on his great-grandfather's land by various generations of the family in the last 135 years. Perhaps this may account for some of his conservatism and a certain disinclination to accept anything new until it has proved itself.

(This New England characteristic brings to mind the story of two maiden ladies from Boston who made a trip to Los Angeles during the summer. Shortly after arrival, one of the ladies complained to her companion about the excessive heat and humidity, whereupon she was reminded by the other lady that such discomfort probably was to be expected because after all they were 3,000 miles from the ocean.)

Lewis Hill was educated at Harvard College, the Harvard Medical School, the Boston Floating Hospital, the Massachusetts General Hospital, and the Boston Children's Hospital. For some years, he was assistant to John Lovett Morse who was then Professor of Pediatrics at the Harvard Medical School, and the leading pediatrician of New England. After that he was in partnership with Morse and Edwin T. Wyman, who had also been an assistant of Morse's. He was one of the charter members of the Academy of Pediatrics when it had only 135 members, and was at the first meeting of the Academy in 1933 when it was held in Atlantic City. For several years, he was on the executive board, and co-operated with Bret Rat-

ner in organizing the Section on Allergy. He gave Seminars and Round Tables at Academy meetings for many years, which were well attended, and which he greatly enjoyed.

Since the beginning of Clinical Allergy in America (about 1916), he has always been much interested in it. He founded the eczema clinic at the Children's Hospital, and ran it as a one man job for a long time; after the second World War, he gave up his general pediatric practice, became Chief of the Allergy Clinic at the hospital, and confined his work to Pediatric Allergy. He retired from the hospital in 1955, and since then has devoted himself to the private practice of Pediatric Allergy.

He has always been especially interested in eczema, and has written many papers concerning it, as well as a little book, which was a compendium of six consecutive papers which had appeared in the *Journal of Pediatrics*.

During World War II, he was, for about 3 years, Chief of Medicine in a 2,500 bed station hospital. Being merely a pediatrician, he found that there were many things in adult medicine which were, by no means clear to him, but having under him several very competent men who knew more than he did, he got along reasonably well. Since retirement from the Children's Hospital, through Harry Mueller, he has kept in close touch with the Allergy Clinic, although taking no active part in it. This has been a source of great satisfaction to him.

In September of 1964, he underwent a serious abdominal operation, and although it was successful, he was out of work for 3 months. The first of January, he returned to full-time work, and has been getting along very well. His disabilities are, however, of such nature that at present, it is not feasible for him to do any traveling.

Ever since he was in preparatory school, Lewis Hill has had the practice of medicine as his main goal, and has set it before everything. He has been fortunate, however, in having a good many hobbies. He has shot ducks and upland game birds ever since boyhood and has taken great interest in ornithology and gardening, has read a great deal, has had a particularly satisfying hobby of carving and painting birds, especially ducks, has collected many old decoy ducks and shore birds, and in the last 20 years, has been especially interested in collecting and restoring antique shotguns, particularly the fine English ones. He has been married to the same wife for 47 years, has twin daughters who have seven children between them. The oldest grandchild is married, so it is not unlikely that he may be a great-grandfather before long.

So Lewis Hill has had a most pleasant and satisfying life, and feels very thankful that he can keep working at the profession he loves so well.

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