

"LOOKING BACK AT 21 YEARS....."

D. EWEN CAMERON, M.D. - A PIONEER
IN CANADIAN PSYCHIATRY.

by

Dorothy Trainer*

"It is difficult to convey to you how isolated a psychiatrist (certainly in the West) felt himself in those early days. There was of course no Canadian Psychiatric Association and I cannot recall a single psychiatric meeting organized in Canada at the time for Canadians. The sense of isolation was greatly intensified by reason of two things: the economic disaster of the early 30's and, as far as the West was concerned, a most devastating drought which lasted for several years and which drove a considerable number of people out of the area altogether. We had no contact with other psychiatrists save occasional meetings with those in one or two scattered mental hospitals in the Province and we maintained contact with the advances of psychiatry chiefly through the journals."

In this communication written to a fellow doctor -- years later -- Dr. D. Ewen Cameron gives an account of the horizon-bound life of the psychiatrist in that period following 1929 when as a young man, he came to Canada and the Brandon Mental Hospital to be in charge of the reception unit. Psychiatry was then but a fledgling science and all of the social innovations of psychiatry, now commonplace, were for the most part unconceived.

Feeling, no doubt, such conditions inadequate to foster the research plans of which he dreamed, the young Dr. Cameron

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after a stay of 7 years, left Western Canada in 1936 for a research appointment at Worcester State Hospital in Massachusetts where he became, one year later, their Resident Director of Research. Two years after his arrival in Worcester, he was again on his way to the position of Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry in the Albany Medical School, Albany, New York, where he was put in charge of the Mosher Memorial, one of the very first psychiatric divisions of general hospitals to be established on this continent.

Future events were to carry him forward on a lengthy and circuitous avenue -- an avenue that was to take him in full circle to Montreal for 21 years and thence back to Albany. For in 1964 he returned to Albany where he is now Research Professor at the Albany Medical School and Director of the new Laboratories for Research in Psychiatry and Aging at the Veterans Administration Hospital there -- another 'first' for Dr. Cameron.

But to return to the 30's, these years were important ones for Dr. Cameron for, although the public grew to know him later chiefly as a powerful figure in the field of international psychiatry, as an administrator and as the director of a famous institute, that decade was very productive scientifically for him. In the Worcester period began his exciting adventure of being the first to introduce insulin coma therapy to North America and there - and in Albany - many of his research plans went forward, including controlled drug studies and work on sensory deprivation. His first professorship was in Albany and he was able to introduce some of the precepts of a former teacher -- Professor Adolf Meyer -- under whom he studied from 1926 to 1928. Meyer had stressed the 'whole man' as opposed to a

dichotomy of mind and body and conceptualized the organism as being incomplete, as requiring a relationship with other organisms to achieve full expression. This ideology was to mature and contribute to all of Dr. Cameron's future concepts in the field of psychiatry. Indeed, a review of the Doctor's work and writings of the 30's would seem to indicate that the later confluence of his career found its origin in this period.

But the year Dr. Cameron commenced his work in Albany was 1938 -- a momentous year. It was in this year, quite unbeknown, that time was running out for millions of men, for a great war was gathering force to explode across the world. The war came and here in Montreal - and no doubt in many other centres - this combat set men to ponder upon the need to study the nature of man. This was the catalyst that led McGill University and the Royal Victoria Hospital to lay plans to establish an institute of psychiatry with each institution in turn setting up its own Department of Psychiatry. In 1943 the Allan Memorial Institute of Psychiatry was created and Dr. Cameron was invited to accept the position as the first Director and the Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry, both in the University and in the Hospital.

Immediately on arrival Dr. Cameron took steps to invite one or two outstandingly able men to join the staff and to establish an undergraduate teaching curriculum, to open clinical in-patient and out-patient services, and to establish laboratories. Five laboratories

were in operation by 1946. Prior to this time, the Mental Hygiene Institute, established in 1929, had been mainly responsible for community psychiatric services to the English-speaking population of Montreal, with the Verdun Protestant Hospital serving as a Provincial mental hospital for the same group. Now Dr. Cameron and Dr. Baruch Silverman, Director of the Mental Hygiene Institute, literally joined hands in the field of community psychiatry so that the two Institutes could inter-relate and work together, each finding its role and each striving for a greater efficacy of conditions and treatment in their respective fields. (The Verdun Protestant Hospital was later to become a part of the McGill psychiatric training network.)

Dr. Cameron's role in the psychiatric milieu in Canada from the very beginning was not confined to the environs of Montreal, rather his influence in Canada -- and we shall speak later about his international influence -- was widespread indeed mainly through the Canadian and Quebec Psychiatric Associations. He was instrumental in the setting up of the Canadian Mental Health Association (formerly the National Committee for Mental Hygiene) in the year 1950, and Dr. C. M. Hincks, under whose leadership the National Committee had been formed, became Consultant to the C.M.H.A. with Dr. Cameron serving as Chairman of the Scientific Planning Committee. Dr. Hincks (recently deceased) first met Dr. Cameron in Brandon, Manitoba, at the start of the 1930's and their relationship continued over the years. Following a meeting of the Board of Directors of the C.M.H.A. in November, 1951,

Dr. Hincks wrote to Dr. Cameron:

"Dear Ewen, Your contribution to the meeting of our Board of Directors was so vital that I want to drop you a note of thanks. For the first time, through you, there was presented to the Board the real role of our Scientific Planning Committee. Through your presentation, it became evident to every member of the Board that this Planning Committee constituted potentially our greatest asset in the promotion of our work. And you whetted the hungers of the Board members to facilitate in every way possible the Committee's efforts under your leadership. I feel we are entering a new era with every prospect of becoming a more effective instrument in the broad field of mental health. And I look upon you, in relation to the C.M.H.A. as providing us with forceful statesmanship and with broad scientific imagination and sound judgement."

What then were the regional accomplishments of this energetic, forceful and brilliant man in his years in Canada? They were manifold; one can list but some. For the record, the Allan Memorial Institute was itself an experiment. It has already been stated that McGill University had decided to set up a Department of Psychiatry. Concomitant with the preliminary talks involved, the Royal Victoria Hospital planned with the Provincial Government to set up a psychiatric 'pilot plant' to afford information regarding the setting up of departments of psychiatry in general hospitals throughout the Province. It was therefore decided that the Allan Memorial Institute should be set up as a joint enterprise of McGill and the Royal Victoria Hospital, with the Rockefeller Foundation according funds to McGill on a 15-year basis and the Provincial Government according funds to the R.V.H. on a 20-year basis. Because the Institute was founded in wartime, no new building ~~was~~ could be contemplated and hence it was that the

"Ravenscrag" mansion was utilized. "Ravenscrag", the palatial home of the late Sir Montagu and Lady Allan had been ^{given} bequeathed to the Royal Victoria Hospital. How the 'pilot plant' succeeded under Dr. Cameron can be seen today in the great expansion of psychiatric facilities in general hospitals in the Province of Quebec.

But to go back to the beginning, the Allan Memorial Institute, as stated, was the first psychiatric division of a general hospital to be opened in this Province and the first in Canada to be opened on an "open door" basis (which Dr. Cameron called "giving responsibility back to the patient"), a step now followed in every Province in Canada. It was one of the first general hospital departments of psychiatry in the world to establish a day hospital; now day hospitals have made their appearance on every continent. Original research was fostered in this pilot plant and grew to encompass basic research, field research and clinical investigation, and to a degree that the Allan Memorial Institute is today one of the foremost psychiatric research centres in existence. One may add here that in addition to the original section on community psychiatry, sections on child and adolescent psychiatry, psychoanalysis, forensic psychiatry and transcultural psychiatry were added on -- all headed by dedicated and highly qualified people -- and other new services to the public were initiated. The Institute grew as well in dimension with a new wing opened in 1953 doubling the bed capacity.

Dr. Cameron was particularly proud of the development of the psychiatric training network of McGill University during his

tenure. The Diploma Course in Psychiatry was first set up in July, 1945 with an enrollment of 6 students and a network of 3 centres -- a mental health clinic (the Mental Hygiene Institute), a mental hospital (the Verdun Protestant Hospital, recently renamed "Douglas Hospital") and a psychiatric division of a general hospital (the Allan Memorial Institute). Statistics show a most rapid acceleration, for in the 1945-1946 term, 14 McGill appointments were made in this Department (teachers, demonstrators, etc.) and in the 19 years of the operation of the Diploma Course while Dr. Cameron was Director of the Institute, this latter figure burgeoned to 122 individuals holding McGill appointments in the Department. The enrollment of postgraduate students grew to 117 in 1964-1965 with others studying for an M.Sc. or a Ph.D. in psychiatry, or in psychoanalytic training; the M.Sc. course having been set up to provide advanced instruction for those going on ultimately to take leadership in teaching and research. In addition, by 1964 many undergraduate students were participating in the various forms of instruction either in the field of psychiatry or in a field contiguous to it. The network itself grew to a total of 8 teaching centres and there were many concomitant innovations in this specialized teaching area. Of course, mention should be made of Dr. W.J. Stauble who was put in charge of the Diploma Course in 1961 and to the other doctors who serve and have served on the various planning committees, especially Dr. H.E. Lehmann.

There is a word carved over the door of the Allan Memorial Institute: it is "Spero". And the spirit of hope for the psychiatric patient did disseminate from the Institute and later from the development of other psychiatric centres associated with the

Department of Psychiatry of McGill University and other psychiatric centres not associated with McGill and serving the French Canadian population. Key advances in the ^{teaching} centres connected with McGill's Department of Psychiatry were the opening of a night hospital at the Montreal General Hospital in 1954, the later development of family therapy at the Jewish General Hospital, the child and adolescent treatment plans of the Montreal Children's Hospital, the urban social programs of the Mental Hygiene Institute, research instituted at Queen Mary Veterans Hospital for the welfare of veterans and the world-acclaimed research in psychopharmacology at the Verdun Protestant Hospital. All these things and others developed to make Montreal one of the principal psychiatric centres in the world.

And this note brings us from local activities to a general assemblage. But before we go on to speak of the World Congress of Psychiatry, a word may be added here with reference to Dr. Cameron as an investigator himself. He was, and still is, particularly engrossed with his work in the field of memory and aging and in the former, he became a recognized authority. Research was to him an enduring vision and research plans were forever being formulated and discussed at this Institute. Dr. Cameron has reported extensively on his own research plans that went forward, and we will come back to this matter later. His inventive turn of mind was equally practical and he saw the culmination of a long-held dream when in 1964 a million-and-half-dollar research and training building was opened at the Allan Memorial containing some of

the most modern psychiatric research facilities in the world.

The Third World Congress of Psychiatry was held in Montreal in June, 1961, with the Allan Memorial Institute as organizational headquarters. One can say explicitly that it was Dr. Ewen Cameron's vision and enterprise that brought this world congress to Montreal. He was the modern Samson among the Philistines. This one man went alone to Paris to persuade the international bureau for the holding of world congresses to make this decision, then to the Provincial, Municipal and Federal Governments, to the Directors of the Royal Victoria Hospital and McGill University and to the various psychiatric bodies -- all of whom needed persuading. This Congress had to be not only physically possible but financially possible and hence persuasion also had to take the form of firm financial commitments from various governmental and other bodies -- a major undertaking in itself.

After all this preliminary spadework had been accomplished, for the two succeeding years Dr. Cameron worked with many other people to prepare the Congress, particularly Dr. C.A. Roberts, Dr. R.A. Cleghorn (the present A.M.I. Director) who was General Chairman of the Program Committee and Dr. Baruch Silverman, whose administrative gifts contributed vastly to the success of the Congress. But all was accomplished and a most successful Congress held under the auspices of the Canadian Psychiatric Association. It would seem that the world paid tribute to the guiding spirit of Dr. Cameron for 3,000 psychiatrists from 63 countries attended

that meet and some 1,000 other psychiatric workers. If words can be thought of as symbolic, then Dr. Cameron's own words as he arose to declare the great Congress open on that day of June 4th, 1961, are really symbolic of himself: "For man's mind goes out to the conquest of the stars. His mind is in the unravelling of the atom These are the days and ours are the occasions that summon up determination, fire the imagination and drive us forward in this the greatest of endeavours." (In the latter words, he was referring to the understanding of man.)

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No mention has yet been made of the beginnings of this renowned career. So let us belatedly regress in time to disclose at least something of the past. Was it a sign of things to come that Dr. Cameron was born in the Bridge of Allan, Scotland? This son of a Scottish Presbyterian minister received his M.B., Ch.B. at Glasgow University in 1924, his D.P.M. from the University of London in 1925 and his M.D. with distinction from Glasgow University in 1936. He received his Diplomate in Psychiatry (American Board) in 1938, was certified in psychiatry in 1938 (New York State) and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in 1948, being certified in Quebec in 1950. He married the charming Jean Rankine, a Lecturer in Mathematics in Glasgow University and an international field hockey and tennis champion. The following vocations of their children are a testimony

to her as well: Duncan - a lawyer, Airlie - a doctor, Stuart - a lawyer, James - a recent B.Sc. graduate of McGill who aims to be a lawyer like his brothers.

Other aspects of Dr. Cameron's professional training and appointments are too numerous to list except to say that from 1927 to 1928 he had a year of residency at the famous Phipps Clinic where he held a Henderson Research Scholarship in psychiatry and in 1929 he spent a year in Zurich in training at Burgholzi Anstalt under Professor H.V. Meier. Reference has already been made to his work under Professor Adolf Meyer.

But the days are long and 21 years are many and it was that number that Dr. Cameron spent in Montreal. In that time he garnered an international reputation for his work. In 1945 he was asked by the Military Tribunal at Nuremberg to be a member of the American panel to examine Rudolf Hess. His work in the field of psychiatry was recognized by the Adolf Meyer Award, the Samuel Rubin Award, an Honorary Fellowship in the American Geriatrics Society, an honorary membership in the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, a Fellowship in the New York Academy of Science and the American Psychiatric Association and various other honorary fellowships and memberships, including an honorary membership in the Canadian Psychiatric Association and a corresponding membership in Gesellschaft Deutscher Neurologen und Psychiater. In 1962 he was asked to give the Maudsley Lecture in London in which he dealt with his work on memory -- "The Processes of Remembering". Currently, he is President of the World Psychiatric Association and President of the Society of Biological

Psychiatry and Vice-President of the Societe Internationale de Psychopathologie de l'Expression. He is Past President of the American Psychiatric Association, the Quebec Psychiatric Association, the Canadian Psychiatric Association and the American Psychopathological Association and he has held posts with many other scientific bodies. In 1951 Dr. Cameron brought forward proposals to the Council of the American Psychiatric Association for the establishment of the Assembly of District Branches and in 1953, with Dr. Cameron as outgoing President, the formation of the Assembly of District Branches was announced. He took active leadership in the establishment of A.P.A. Regional Research Conferences, their Divisional Meetings, Institutes of Teaching and the Commission on Long Term Policies, the latter being set up during his Presidency.

This chronicle would not be complete without a brief review of Dr. Cameron as a doctor, as a writer, and his personality as Director of the Allan Memorial Institute. These items will be dealt with in that order.

As a doctor, it seems a platitude to say that he is a great humanitarian for surely the reader has gathered this by now. He has become so renowned in this sphere that patients come to him from all over the United States and Canada and with each he deals as a kind man, as a skilled practitioner.

To speak of him as a writer would be much more involved

save for one thing: The record in this case speaks for itself and Dr. Cameron has written prolifically so that all may read. Over the years, more than 130 published articles have appeared to date, an uncounted number of talks (for he is a most accomplished speaker and much in demand) and 4 books, and therein lie the report of his work, his intent and his philosophy, and a record as well of all the things that have blossomed forth up to the present time as a result of his contribution, particularly to the Canadian scene.

And, finally, what was he like personally as Director of the Allan Memorial Institute? He is a forceful man and this is perhaps best illustrated by a little anecdote: He enquired one day if the Colombo Plan students are provided with their lunch free of charge. It was a quiet remark -- perhaps thinking out loud. The result was dynamic! Within a matter of minutes, five A.M.I. telephones were pulsating with messages in search of the answer. This is Dr. Cameron. He has a "presence", an impact upon people. He is quite a humorist and quick on repartee and always seems to be doing two or three things at once. This was noted by Mrs. Mary Weil of the "R.V.H. News" (the Royal Victoria Hospital house organ) in this manner: "This reporter has seen him during the World Congress answering questions posed by a science writer, recording a radio interview, receiving one or two guests, solving a few emergencies via the telephone -- all at the same time with speed, wit tranquility and enjoyment."

Someone has said that the way to do anything well is to work

long hours and Dr. Cameron surely did this. To awaken in his home from 5 - 6 a.m. was his wont (by a series of ringing alarm clocks) and the dictating machine was shortly in use as dictation went forward to his team of secretaries who would arrive at their desks at the Institute at 9 a.m. He preceded them generally by about one-half hour, but a great deal of work had already been accomplished, and his day would extend into the nocturnal hours of 7 or 8 o'clock -- and sometimes later. He has a remarkably organized and systematic mind and to the uninitiated individual entering his sanctum, it might have seemed that the good doctor was not very busy at all. Few if any papers collected on his desk, having been despatched almost as soon as they arrived, and, as most executives will agree, this was in itself an accomplishment. He was a tremendous worker and no higher praise can be offered than to say that he asked of no man what he would not do himself. But he asked a good deal and was usually rewarded by a total effort on the part of his staff.

The complete story of an Institute is of course the story of many people and in 21 years uncounted numbers have walked these corridors. This record purports to be a resume concerning only one of those men and women. Perforce the names of a multitude of workers are omitted -- many highly capable and some not so capable -- but all having left their imprint in some way. But one man had guidance over all these legions for an interim of a score and one years. And when one considers that quite apart from these workers, professional and non-professional, there are now enrolled in the McGill Diploma Course of Psychiatry, as students, representatives of 35 different

nationalities, one can understand something of the diversity of elements which make up such an institute and which had to be amalgamated. As a leader, Dr. Cameron was outstanding for he seemed instinctively to know, as each fresh crop of students strode in and as new workers arrived, how to blend these often dissimilar elements into a smoothly working team.

He has too a controversial nature and in controversy his sabre is sharp and usually finds its mark. His most famous hassle involved a Rotary Club address in 1951 wherein he claimed that it was an appalling act of inhumanity to assert that children are born sinful. He went on to say that a moral system which labelled men "good" or "bad" in accordance with how they conformed to a rigid, unchanging, long out of date code, was seriously destructive. This system, he said, bred feelings of anxiety and guilt because there is a wide gap between what the code said men should do and what most actually do. He advised a humanistic concept of behaviour. This talk was roundly condemned by the clergy across Canada, led by the Anglican Bishop of Montreal and the French Canadian Cardinal resident in the city. It was even discussed on the floor of the Anglican Synod. Today, the same talk would no doubt be accepted with equanimity.

Dr. Cameron was asked what he himself thought about the 21 years he spent at the Allan Memorial Institute. "You know," he wrote, "to be Chairman of one of the great departments of a University

and Director of an Institute, with the fellowship of men of outstanding ability, is something which keeps one constantly and intensely alert. Every day some new door is opening to the future, and men of great capacity who have uncovered new and fascinating things come to the Institute to tell what they have found and thought.

"Looking back at these 21 years, each was bright with promise, stirring with endeavor, lit above all by the never-ending excitement of the continually new. The choice is hard when one tries to winnow out the most worthwhile things that came to pass. Was it the discovery of a new hormone; the bringing into being of a new laboratory, the working out with long and loving labor the intricacies of a psychophysiological correlate; the launching of child psychiatry, destined some day to play its part in remolding man himself; the reorganization of a great mental hospital into one still greater -- more merciful, more humane, and infinitely more powerful to save and restore; the building of psychiatric divisions in general hospitals; the teaching which started with the medical students and men who came to us for training, but ran far beyond them to every category of personnel in the Institute, to the patients, and indeed to the community at large? Was it the new and sometimes daring forms of treatment which in later years afforded much relief of human suffering? No one can tell since no one can yet know their full consequences.

"But if one looks to those things started by the Department that are already exerting influence in far and nearby places, we

"can recognize that chief among the things accomplished are:

"First, the day hospital which is at work day after day in almost every country in the world and is already passing into form after new form as it goes into service in many different settings.

"Second, the McGill University Psychiatric Training Network which has provided leaders in psychiatry to more than half the countries in the world, and already reckons among its former students and teachers eight men who came to hold Chairmanships of Psychiatry themselves.

"Third, Transcultural Psychiatry which had its origin in McGill's Department of Psychiatry ~~IS NOW BEING ESTABLISHED IN MANY OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD~~, which now has its counterparts in scores of universities and which has become a household word in psychiatry. It has served to bring men from scores of countries together, to work on problems common to all humanity.

"Fourth, the Gerontological Unit, the first of its kind in the world, led by a series of brilliant doctors, it has received wide recognition, and we anticipate that this too will soon be followed by the establishment of similar laboratories in other leading centres.

"Fifth, the founding of the World Psychiatric Association, ^{participated} in which members of the Department of Psychiatry of McGill University, both through their magnificent organization of the Third World Congress of Psychiatry in Montreal in 1961, and by their determined advocacy

of the foundation of the World Psychiatric Association at the time of the Congress. The World Psychiatric Association is still in its infancy but there is every reason to anticipate that, recognized as it now is by the World Health Organization as the official, non-governmental representative of psychiatry throughout the world, its impact will grow from decade to decade.

"Lastly, there is that most intangible thing, the spirit of the Institute, its power to inspire with dedicated purpose all those who come to work herein; its power to fill with bright confidence all those who come seeking help; its urgency and its hope; its intense concern with humanity; the unrelenting determination of its members to break through the old limits, to pass beyond the already known, to wider and wider fields of knowledge; the regard for the dignity and work of every human being who turns to the Institute in his hour of need."

Little can be added now to Dr. Cameron's own eloquent words, but one is reminded of a passage from the Epistle to the Philippians (4:8) -- ".....whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

On September 1st, 1964 Dr. Cameron took up his newly accepted duties as Research Professor at the Albany Medical School and as Director of the ~~the~~ Laboratories for Research in Psychiatry and Aging at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Albany. In these posts,

he will have freedom to work until such time as he wishes to retire, and one need hardly add, in closing, that great expectations go out from the Allan Memorial Institute to Dr. Cameron in these new enterprises.

Allan Memorial Institute
July 20, 1965.

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