THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE
Harvard University

Lot Bates Page

Lot Page was born in Tarrytown, N.Y., on April 8, 1923, and grew up in West Newbury, Mass. He attended Middlebury College, entered Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, and, after two years, transferred to Harvard Medical School, graduating in 1949. After completing a medical internship at Massachusetts General Hospital, he was appointed an instructor in physiology at New York University in the laboratory of the noted renal physiologist Homer Smith.

It was under Homer Smith's tutelage that Dr. Page developed his lifelong interest in sodium metabolism. The Korean War resulted in Lot's second call to Army service, where he performed front-line research on cold injury and hypothermia in combat, particularly as it related to renal function. After discharge from the Army, Lot returned to Massachusetts General Hospital to complete his residency in medicine.

Lot was a remarkable teacher, sharing his large fund of knowledge as he helped stabilize acutely ill patients in the early hours of the morning. He was exceptionally skillful in knowing how to stand back, to encourage the full exercise of a junior's judgment, until it faltered for lack of experience. The intervention was then gentle, but effective.

After residency, Lot continued his interest in sodium metabolism as a postdoctoral fellow in Alexander Leaf's laboratory at Massachusetts General Hospital, where he examined ion transport across the toad bladder. Upon joining the staff, Lot's interest in sodium naturally led to the clinical pursuit of hypertension and an appointment as head of the hypertension unit. It was in this context that some of his most important research work was accomplished. A casual conversation between a young investigator, Edgar Haber, who was looking for a use for an angiotensin-specific antibody that had just been generated in his laboratory, and Lot, who recognized immediately its potential, led to the development of a radioimmunoassay for renin activity. This assay--the first for measuring a small peptide at picomolar concentrations--had a significant impact on clinical and laboratory studies in hypertension, and it continues to be used today in

modified form.

Lot assumed a parallel responsibility as head of the hospital's chemistry laboratories, a period during which he brought out, with Perry Culver, a new edition of Thomas Ham's "A Syllabus of Laboratory Examinations in Clinical Diagnosis." This book remained a standard text in most medical schools and hospitals for a number of years.

In 1966, Lot was appointed chief of medicine at Newton-Wellesley Hospital, and, in 1970, a professor of medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine. At the time of his arrival, Newton-Wellesley was a modest and conventional community institution, dedicated to the private practice of medicine, with little interest in teaching. While continuing laboratory research on the renin-angiotension system and initiating significant epidemiological studies in hypertension, Lot proceeded to create a teaching service that now has a stellar national reputation. Within 10 months of his arrival, Lot had appointed a full-time chief of cardiology, and over the next several years he broadened the Department of Medicine to include 12 subdivisions, each with a full-time chief. Teaching floors were established, medical students from Tufts were rotated to the service on a regular basis, and a house-staff training program was founded. Traditional practitioners often resisted the changes occurring in their comfortable realm, but by dint of reason, discussion, good humor and gentle persuasion. Lot effected a transformation that all eventually applauded. Soon Newton-Wellesley Hospital was recognized nationally as one of the highly desirable residencies in internal medicine.

Lot's time at Newton-Wellesley Hospital also was marked by a remarkable discovery in hypertension epidemiology. In the course of biennial expeditions to the Solomon Islands, Africa and Iran (beginning in 1966 and ending in 1980), Lot established that, in contrast with the well-known observation that blood pressure increased gradually with age in the developed world, blood pressure remained unchanged throughout life in unacculturated populations. Many investigators in the field of hypertension have been stimulated by this observation, which is considered a significant key to our understanding of the disease.

After 19 years at Newton-Wellesley Hospital, at the height of his success, Lot resigned his chairmanship, much to the dismay of his colleagues. He accepted an appointment at the National Institute on Aging, a division of the National Institutes of Health. Then, after four years at the NIH, he decided to return to clinical medicine. At the age 66, he was appointed chief of medicine at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Manchester, N.H., rejoining the Harvard faculty as a clinical professor of medicine. Regrettably, Lot did not long enjoy this new challenge, but died of cancer in his 67th year.

The foregoing recitation of a splendid career in research, teaching and academic leadership does not fully measure the dimensions of Lot Page. His interests outside of medicine were remarkably broad. He was a naturalist, a beekeeper, an authority on mushrooms, a bird watcher, a spellbinding raconteur, a photographer with a sharp eye, an enthusiastic flutist and recorder player (both as a soloist and in ensemble) a world traveler and amateur anthropologist. Lot's overwhelming characteristic was his

enthusiasm for whatever activity engaged him at the moment. And within his whirlwind of professional and personal activities, Lot found time to be a good father and a loving husband.

His colleagues have many telling and amusing anecdotes about Lot. Two epitomize his spontaneity and his unconventionality in attaining his goals. G.C. Sanchez recalls that during a trip to a remote village in Ecuador, Lot borrowed a local flute from one of his hosts and, much to the delight of a rapidly gathering crowd, played it with verve and competence. By this simple act, he engaged an otherwise wary group. Henry Yager tells of an automobile trip from Manhattan to Mount Desert Island with two seals in the back seat, punctuated by the hilarious escape during a rest stop of one of the animals deep into the Maine woods. After an energetic chase, the flapping animal was recovered. The seal later contributed considerably to our understanding of the physiology of the diving reflex.

It is difficult to encapsulate Lot's life in a single summary sentence, except perhaps to say that the world has lost an individual whose qualities are too rarely found in this time of narrow focus--one whose world view was more akin to the outlook of those who lived when natural science was considered a single, seamless discipline.

Respectfully submitted,

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