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# Dr. Wilburt C. Davison Completes 30 Years As Dean of Duke School of Medicine

by Norman K. Nelson

Dean Wilburt C. Davison was once described by the famed British physician Sir William Osler as "a new American colt who is wrecking a medical school tradition."

Since that memorable day at Oxford University in 1913, Dean Davison has continued wrecking traditions—but always with an eye to making way for improvements. Now, on the eve of his 30th anniversary as Duke medical dean, he shows no inclination toward letting up.

Dr. Davison was elected dean of the Duke Medical School by the University's Board of Trustees Jan. 21, 1927. Assistant dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine at that time, he came to a university where both the hospital and medical school were still only in the idea stage. Today the school and its associated hospital comprise one of America's leading medical centers.

## *Intellect, Energy and Wit*

"Dave," seems always to be in a hurry. He speaks in a deep energetic voice and skips from one idea to another with a rapidity that sometimes leaves his listeners somewhat bewildered. Described by a close friend as possessing "a nimble wit and a broad sense of humor," the dean can take a joke as well as tell one.

Dean Davison detests formality. He likes to work in shirt sleeves and open collar, although he keeps an assortment of neckties handy in case of an



DR. WILBURT C. DAVISON

"emergency." His office is located off one of the busiest corridors of the Medical School, and his door is always open, with no secretarial barriers.

A man of tremendous energy, Dean Davison has held a host of public service jobs including vice-chairmanship of the National Research Council's Division of Medical Sciences and membership on the National Health Council. He has been a consultant to the U.S. Army Surgeon General, a member of the executive committee of the Association of American Medical Colleges and a member of the Executive Reserve in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health and Medical).

Recently, he was named to Governor Luther Hodges' Nuclear Energy Advisory Committee to represent North Carolina in atomic energy development in the South.

On top of these, and dozens of other activities at the national and state levels, Dean Davison has found time to write many scientific papers plus a book, "The Compleat Pediatrician," which will appear in its seventh edition in February.

## *"It's His Medical School"*

A Duke official recently said of Dean Davison, "It's amazing how a man can have so many active interests and not neglect any of them. But no matter where he is or what he's doing, the Medical School holds first place in his thinking. It's his medical school."

The dean himself, however, has never laid claim to such ownership. He views the school as an institution dependent upon internal cooperation for excellence and progress.

When Dean Davison came to Duke in 1927, he shouldered the responsibility of planning, organizing and directing the Medical School, literally from the ground up. Besides supervising the building and equipping of the school, he faced the problem of selecting a faculty.

Dean Davison realized from the outset that an efficient faculty would have to be more than a collection of

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