

# Black History Month

## Medical Marvels

### Neurosurgeon called upon for delicate operations

By Herbert L. White  
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Dr. Ben Carson's reputation as a neurosurgeon has grown to global proportions.

Last year, he made headlines as part of the medical team that separated conjoined twins in Singapore. Although the sisters died, Carson said they knew there was a chance surgery would fail.

After meeting the two Iranian sisters conjoined at the head, they told Carson, the director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins



Carson

surgeon to help separate them.

"I was taken by their level of intelligence but also their state of depression," Carson

University and Johns Hopkins Hospital, they would rather die than live another day attached. It was his job as consulting neuro-

surgeon to help separate them. "I was taken by their level of intelligence but also their state of depression," Carson

told the Baltimore Business Journal. "They had just reached the end of their rope, and they couldn't stand to be together anymore."

After a 53-hour operation - "which actually went pretty well until we got into the last hour or two," Carson said - the twins died from uncontrollable bleeding. Carson had to deal with the failure while juggling an international media bent on covering the twins' story.

While he defined the operation as a failure, Carson said

it was the beginning of progress - even for someone considered to be among the world's best pediatric neurosurgeons.

"I think there are a number of things that you can take away from this," he said. "You learn and you have to make sure that you learn from every failure. You can only do what you can do; you do your best and let God do the rest."

Carson's stake in pediatrics stems from many factors, including his faith and a desire to get a good return on

his investment of effort. Seeing a child live a healthy life following an operation he performs is slightly more satisfying than operating on adults, he said.

"God, I think he gave us talent so we could improve mankind. That's what I see myself as trying to do," he said. "The thing I like about kids is that you get a lot more bang for the buck; your reward might be 40 or 50 years of life. You don't get that from an adult."

A little less television as a child helped him hone his

academic and social skills. "As with everything, I tend not to be a traditionalist," he said. "My mother used to always say, 'Why do you look at TV? Develop your mind.' I guess I took that to heart; use the brain God gave you to think."

Carson is preparing for another possible surgery for another set of conjoined twins born in Europe last year. When the babies are at least three months old, they will probably be flown to the United States for the operation, he said.

### Charles Drew pioneered blood bank

SPECIAL TO THE POST

African American surgeon Charles Richard Drew (1904-1950) was a pioneer in developing the blood bank and was an outstanding leader in the training of surgeons.

Drew was born in Washington, D.C., on June 3, 1904, the eldest of five children. The close-knit family lived in modest circumstances and was highly respected.

Drew was educated in the Washington public schools. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from Amherst College (1926) and his doctor of medicine and master of surgery degrees from McGill University in Canada (1933). Having decided upon a career in surgery, he went to Howard University in Washington, D.C., in 1935. After the next year as a surgical resident, he was sent by Howard for 2 years of advanced study under a General Education Board fellowship to Columbia University, which awarded him the doctor of medical science degree.

At Columbia, under the direction of John Scudder, Drew completed his pioneering and definitive thesis Banked Blood (1940). The Blood Transfusion Betterment Association in New York funded various programs of research; one of these, on blood plasma, was conducted by Scudder and Drew. In 1940, during

World War II, Scudder suggested that the association ship dried plasma to France and England. The association appointed Drew director of its "Blood for Britain" project in September 1940.

In 1941 Drew was appointed director of the first American Red Cross Bank and assistant director of blood procurement for the National Research Council, in charge of blood for use by the U.S. Army and Navy. He criticized the policy of segregating blood racially as having no scientific basis.

In October 1941 Drew returned to Howard as head of the department of surgery and was made an examiner for the American Board of Surgery. Chief of staff of Freedmen's Hospital from 1944 to 1946, he was appointed medical director of the hospital for 1946-1947. At Howard, Drew firmly established a progressive modern surgery program. He was a dynamic and inspirational teacher. While he was still alive, eight of his residents became diplomates of the American Board of Surgery, and many more who started their training under him became board-certified and did significant work all over the world.

Drew published 19 papers, the first 13 dealing with blood therapy. The last 6 reflected broadening interests, one posthumous

title being "Negro Scholars in Scientific Research."

During six years as chairman of the surgical section of the National Medical Association, Drew brought new vigor and standards to the group. He was in demand as a speaker, and he served on numerous boards with a wide spectrum of interests, including the 12th Street Branch of the YMCA in Washington.

Most of Drew's achievements were promptly recognized. He received the Spingarn Medal of the NAACP (1943) and honorary doctor of science degrees from Virginia State College and Amherst College. In 1946 he became a fellow of the International College of Surgeons and served in

1949 as surgical consultant to the surgeon general, U.S. Army. Drew's radiant geniality and warm sense of humor endeared him to patients. He married Minnie Lenore Robbins on Sept. 23, 1939, and the couple had four children. He was killed in an automobile accident on April 1, 1950.

In 1959 Sigma Pi Phi fraternity presented an oil portrait of Drew to the American National Red Cross. In Los Angeles the Charles R. Drew Medical Society and the Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School of the Martin Luther King Jr. Hospital perpetuate his name. A health center in Brooklyn and the Harlem Hospital Center blood bank in New York City are named for him. The surgical section of the National Medical Association has an annual Charles R. Drew Forum for the presentation of original surgical research, and about 20 public schools have been



Drew

### Williams performed first heart surgery

By Dr. Donita Brown  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Daniel Hale Williams was born at Hollidaysburg, Pa., the son of Daniel and Sarah (Price) Williams.

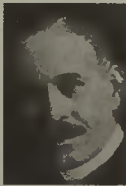
He attracted the interest of Dr. Henry Palmer, one of the leading surgeons of that section, and in 1878 began the study of medicine in his office. In 1883 he was graduated with the degree of M.D. at the Chicago Medical College, the medical department of Northwestern University. After an internship in Mercy Hospital he entered practice in Chicago, associating himself with the surgical service of the South Side Dispensary (1884-91). He was appointed demonstrator of anatomy at his alma mater in 1885, holding the position for four years.

Realizing the lack of facilities for the training of colored men as internes and of colored women as nurses, he organized Provident Hospital in 1891, which stands as an enduring monument to him. Its training school for nurses was the first for colored women in the United States. He served on the surgical staff of this hospital from its opening until 1912.

He served on the surgical staff of Cook County Hospital from 1900 to 1906, and from 1907 to the time of his death he was an associate attending surgeon to St. Luke's Hospital. When in 1899 he was appointed professor of clinical surgery at Meharry Medical College at Nashville, Tenn., he inaugurated the first surgical clinics given at that institution.

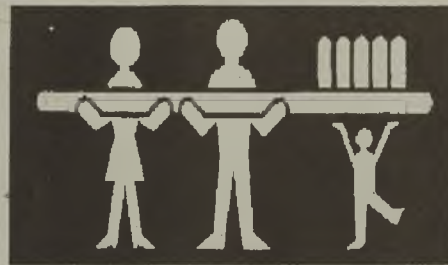
Though careful and methodical in his surgical technique he was a daring operator. He is credited with having performed in 1893 the first successful surgical closure of a wound of the heart and pericardium. He also perfected a suture for the arrest of hemorrhage from the spleen.

The beginning of his surgical career was coincident with the advent of asepsis, which he adopted and followed consistently.



Williams

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