



# Intercom

duke university medical center

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 36

SEPTEMBER 24, 1971

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

## Medical Transcription: New World Opens For Blind Workers

Medical terminology is a language in itself. It takes physicians years to learn and master it, while the majority of people go through life never really understanding its complexities and meanings.

It is a rare find then when you come upon a secretary who not only knows how to spell medical terms, but who also understands most of them. It is an even rarer find when you realize she has never seen in print the words she knows and writes so well.

Mrs. Marie Boring, a medical transcriptionist for the chief resident in medicine, is reputed to be a "whiz at medical terminology." She credits a large part of her skill to the Duke program that trained her.

Entitled "Vocation Rehabilitation Medical Transcription Program," the course trains blind persons to be medical typists. Begun in 1961, it was the idea of Charles Frenzel, then superintendent of the Hospital, and Earl Jennings of the North Carolina State Commission for the Blind.

"When I first started the course," said Mrs. Boring, "I thought I was in the wrong place. All the words were Greek and Latin."

But with the help of Webster's and her teacher spelling from Dorland's Medical Dictionary, the words became less strange to Mrs. Boring and she decided to stay with the program. Dorland's, put into a braille speller in 1970, sits on the desk in her office today, along with a card file she made when she started the program. On the file, in braille, are the names of difficult medical terms and drugs which she has come across through the years.

She is looking forward to acquiring a copy of the Physician's Desk Reference, a comprehensive listing of drugs physicians use, which has just been published in braille.

According to Mrs. Margaret Long, supervisor of the program since it began, with these reference books, blind people are as equipped as any sighted person to be medical transcriptionists. "In fact, they often do better than the sighted," she said.

Mrs. Boring is a graduate of Morehead School in Raleigh, where most of the students in the program come from. She also attended Guilford College in Greensboro, but quit her senior year to get married.

When she came to Duke for the program some years later, it was only the second time she had ever worked in public. "It was quite an experience," she said, "and I am grateful for the opportunity."

Although the program is set up for a year, with four persons training at a time, the students can leave sooner or later at Mrs. Long's discretion. Mrs. Boring trained for six months when her supervisor felt she was ready to be on her own.

*(continued on page two)*



**A WOMAN'S BEST FRIEND**—Mrs. Boring gives an affectionate pat to her beautiful German shepherd, who sits quietly by her side in her office on the second floor of the Hospital. Mrs. Boring got the seeing eye dog, named Tamba, before she started the Duke training program and found that he learned the complicated clinic routes quicker than she did.  
*(photo by Lewis Parrish)*