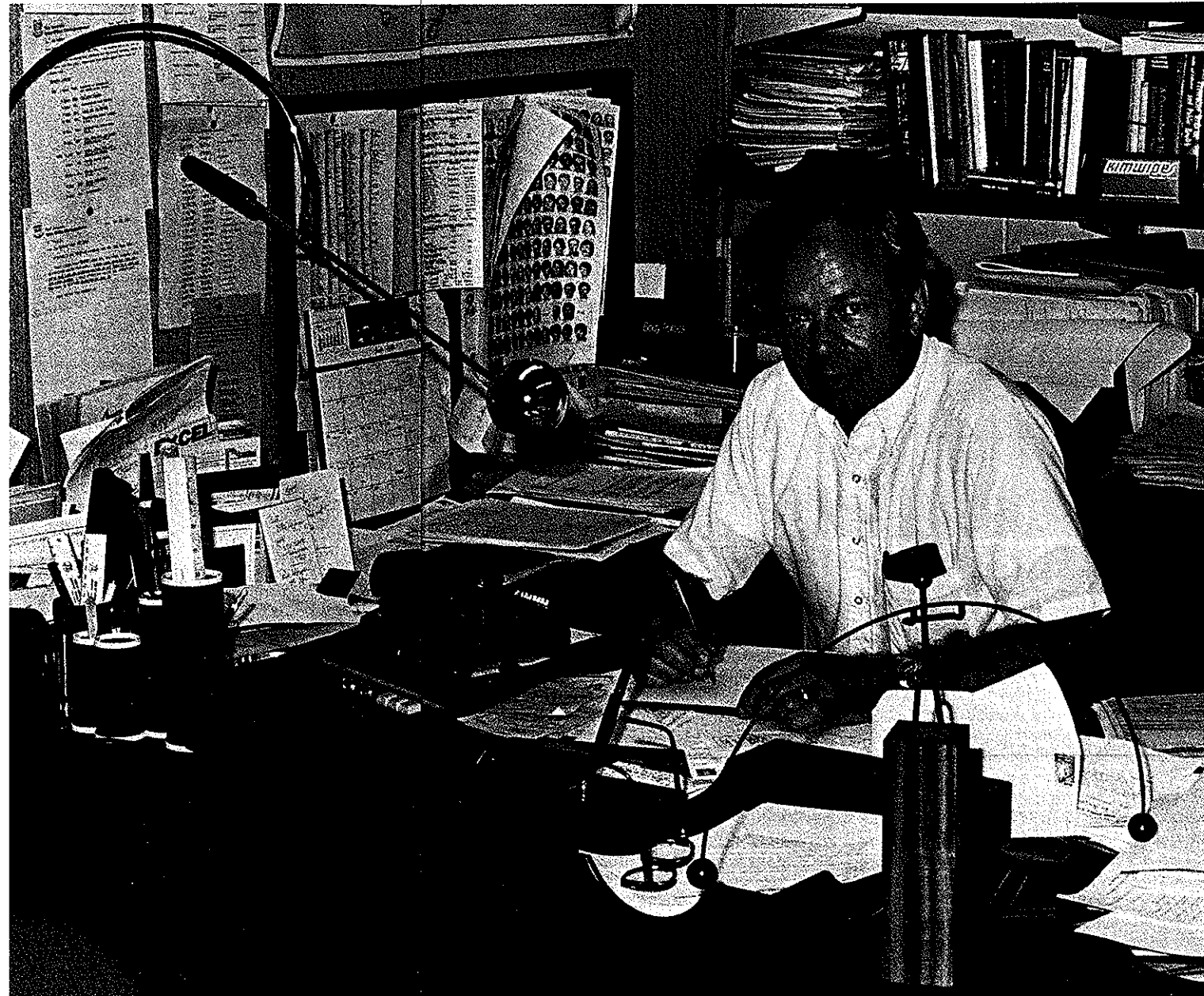


# Robert McCollum: A Good Sense of Balance

by Steve Adams



Dr. Robert McCollum at his desk at Yale.

When Dr. Robert W. McCollum became chairman of Yale's department of epidemiology and public health 12 years ago, his wife gave him a gift chosen to inspire and guide his leadership. The gift — a wire sculpture of a tightrope walker with a long, drooping balance pole — has decorated his desk at Yale for the past dozen years. And while the metal figure may not have been a factor in his successful balancing of his roles as teacher, administrator and epidemiologist, Dr. McCollum is not one to overlook any possibilities. When he takes over the helm of Dartmouth Medical School on January 1, the sculpture will move into the dean's office with him.

The Medical School's new dean is a Texan with a quick smile and an easygoing manner, but there is an intensity about him, a light in

his eyes that belies his manner. A practical man, he has throughout his career built upon the strengths and opportunities that have been available to him. This explains, in part, his decision to seek and to accept the deanship of DMS.

"I've been very happy at Yale, but this new job is intriguing," he explains. "I'm impressed with the people, the institution and the evolving stage it's in. I think Dartmouth Medical School has a greater potential for teaching, research and research support than is now apparent.

"Dartmouth Medical School can cover the spectrum of the medical sciences and practices. It has high medical technology, it has good basic researchers to maintain the scientific basis of medicine and it has a developing momentum for carrying the medical

knowledge within the Medical Center out to the surrounding communities through the School's outreach programs. Dartmouth is, and will be, an excellent place to promote both specialty and family practice. The students at Yale tend to be highly research-motivated and directed. The Dartmouth students seem to have a wider range of interests."

At Yale, Dr. McCollum has been a careful administrator, a dedicated teacher and a thorough epidemiologist. During his more than a decade at the helm, the department of epidemiology and public health's activities, offerings and enrollment have been expanded without a proportional increase in faculty. He takes a great deal of pride in the evolution the department has undergone during a period of national and international eco-

nomic instability.

True to the wire man with the balancing pole, Dr. McCollum has not let his role of administrator outweigh his love for teaching. He has taught courses in infectious disease epidemiology to both medical students and public health students. "It's essential for my peace of mind," he says. "My load varies from one semester to another, but I've always managed to maintain some teaching responsibilities. Teaching keeps one honest."

A third role Dr. McCollum has been playing for years is that of epidemiologist. His first experiences in this field were with poliomyelitis in the early 1950s. Currently, he is involved in the battle against hepatitis. For the past quarter-century, he and his colleagues at Yale have been seeking answers to this complex liver disease and while their

research efforts have yet to achieve the dramatic success of the polio campaign, recent advances offer such a promise for the future.

When he moves north to become the Medical School's tenth dean, Dr. McCollum intends to continue his balancing act. Besides fulfilling his responsibilities as dean, he will teach in the department of community and family medicine, do some probing in the department of microbiology and continue his efforts to solve parts of the hepatitis riddle. In this last area, he will maintain his collaboration with his colleagues at Yale, at least initially.

He also plans to have enough time left over to enjoy the natural attractions the Upper Valley has to offer.

Born 56 years ago in Waco, Texas, Robert

## *A message from the Medical School's new dean:*

Since my appointment was announced last May I have been told repeatedly what a nice place Hanover is — how beautiful, how friendly, how comfortable life is in the Upper Valley. I agree that all of these features added to the attractiveness of coming to Dartmouth, but the true lure is a medical school which is clearly reemerging in its original setting and with the same spirit and determination demonstrated by Nathan Smith almost two centuries ago. Friendly commentators who offer words of caution about the problems, past and current, are also usually kind enough to balance these challenges with an optimistic appraisal of the prospects. Frequent questions are: "What are your plans? What are your goals? What changes are you going to make?" While such questions are understandable and certainly not unexpected, I feel it would be premature to make predictions or strong assertions before I am more familiar with the faculty, students, and staff and have a better understanding of their perceptions of the strengths, the problems, the needs and the opportunities. Unlike the days of Nathan Smith, a medical school can no longer be perceived as a one-man institution, or even the reflection of a single person's plan.

Expressed simply, my goal for guiding DMS in the coming decade is to steer it clear of becoming anything resembling a trade school (not a serious worry) while making certain that it does not become a research institute in which medical education is merely a secondary interest and function of the faculty. The School must also take full advantage of its proximity to and strong relationship with its parent college, its membership in the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and its partnership with the VA Hospital, ever mindful that in all of these associations mutual benefits should flow from the joint mission in medical education. I look forward to playing a role in defining and guiding that mission and to working closely with the strong faculty and student body in carrying it out successfully.

Robert W. McCollum, M.D.

McCollum was graduated from Baylor University in 1945, a year after he had begun his medical studies at Johns Hopkins. He returned to Texas in the summer of 1946 for an "externship" in a hospital for crippled children in Dallas. There he was introduced to the devastation of poliomyelitis and came to the realization that physiotherapy and corrective surgery could never be as effective as avoiding the disease in the first place. The seeds of a career in epidemiology and preventive medicine were planted.

He graduated from Johns Hopkins in 1948, then served an internship in pathology at Presbyterian Hospital in New York City and an internship in internal medicine at Vanderbilt University Hospital in Nashville. During this second internship, he lost patients to several common viral diseases, including hepatitis and infectious mononucleosis. These experiences influenced his ultimate decision to pursue a career in epidemiology.

Dr. McCollum moved to New Haven to begin a residency in internal medicine at Yale in the summer of 1950, just at the onset of a small polio epidemic. The "iron lungs" which were being used to treat victims of the disease tended to reinforce his earlier realization of the possibilities in epidemiology and preventive medicine. The following year, he became a research assistant in Yale's section of preventive medicine. There he began working on two specific diseases: hepatitis with Dr. John Paul and poliomyelitis with Dr. Dorothy Horstmann. He spent the summer of 1951 in Ohio, taking blood samples from the members of paralytic polio victims' families and shipping the samples back to Dr. Horstmann and her colleagues at Yale. From some of these samples, the researchers isolated the polio virus — only the second time viremia had been demonstrated in human infections. This discovery and subsequent research at Yale were instrumental in understanding the pathogenesis of poliomyelitis and led to a rational basis for vaccine-induced antibody



"As an administrator, he has a remarkable capacity to keep six balls in the air at the same time," Dr. Dorothy Horstmann reports.

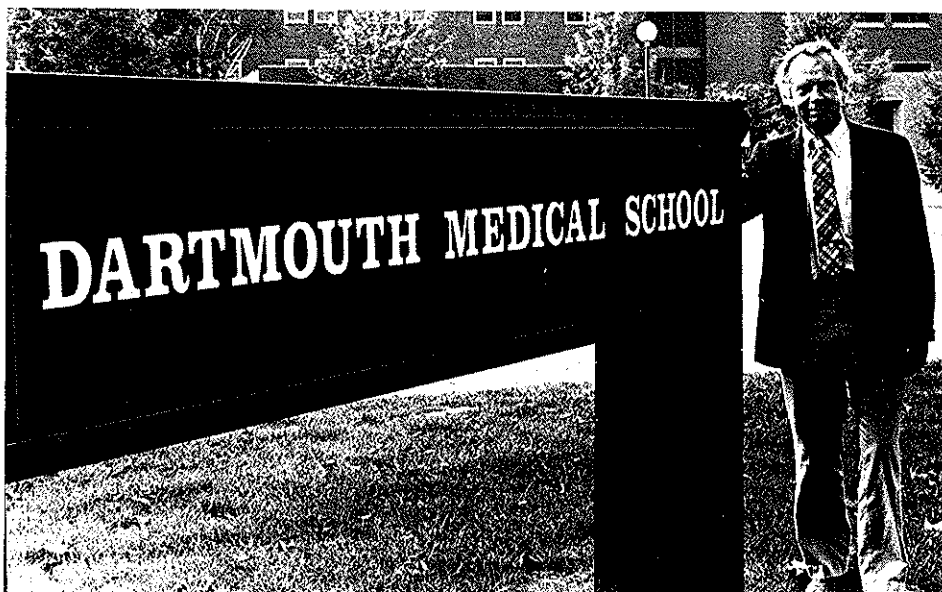
protection.

At the same time the polio riddle was being solved in the United States, the Army was confronting a new and devastating disease in Korea — hemorrhagic fever. This disease, previously unknown to Western medicine, was killing many American soldiers. The Army called Dr. McCollum up to active duty in 1952 and sent him to a medical laboratory in Tokyo and then to a special mobile army surgical hospital (MASH) research unit in Korea. He spent part of two years with a research team, studying hemorrhagic fever and trying, unsuccessfully, to find the etiologic agent for the disease. The cause of the Korean hemorrhagic fever has only recently been isolated.

Returning to Yale in 1954, Dr. McCollum resumed his research on hepatitis. In addition to attempts to infect chimpanzees and other non-human primates, one of his earliest endeavors was to try to establish the size of the hepatitis B virus and to test the feasibility of filtration as a way to eliminate it from pooled plasma and blood. He also did epidemiologic studies of hepatitis among civilian and military populations, trying to get a better understanding of its modes of transmission. Several other researchers were seeking the same type of information, and for many years all met with many more failures than successes.

In 1968, Dr. Baruch S. Blumberg of the University of Pennsylvania discovered the Australian antigen, a particle related to the causative agent of hepatitis B. This discovery later earned him the Nobel Prize. Since then, Dr. McCollum has worked with Dr. George LeBouvier of Yale, Dr. Saul Krugman of New York University and many others in studying the antigen, its distribution and the role it plays in viral hepatitis. Over the past two years, he has supervised a Yale medical student's thesis research on hepatitis B infections among Polynesian populations in the French Society Islands. He has also sought, thus far unsuccessfully, to transmit the hepatitis B virus to tissue cultures. Recently, he served on the advisory board for a major field trial of a new hepatitis B vaccine conducted by Dr. Wolf Szmunes in New York City. The vaccine is expected to be licensed in the near future. In addition to his work with hepatitis B, Dr. McCollum is also studying types A and non-A/non-B hepatitis.

"Bob McCollum's great research interest has been hepatitis for most of the 30 years  
(continued on page 43)



member report on a class secretary. **Jim Vailas** broke with that precedent recently in sending in the following letter about **Tex Larson**. Ed.

I thought it would only be appropriate to send you this anecdotal information about **Tex Larson**, who has recently informed me that he will be writing the class column. I decided to contribute my bit about him since he will not confess about himself to the readers of the magazine.

The unperturbable Texan has been filling that role here in D.C. as he has been maintaining a sane and non-medical style of life for **Jeff Georgia**, himself and me. He makes sure we exercise, prepare decent meals and socialize, all of which are luxuries for interns. Although Tex appears unperturbed by the excessive demands of internship and caring for his surgical housemates, he occasionally exhibits the expected fatigue. One time he fell asleep while talking to his mother on the phone, only to be awakened by her raised voice, "Eric, are you listening . . . are you still there." Another time, he returned home at an unexpectedly late hour during the week and explained that he had lost his sense of direction while driving and had found himself at the D.C. General Hospital emergency room, where he finally was placed on track. Tex, my response to you is . . . thanks.

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### Reflections — from page 2

which one requires in the research laboratory. A strong medical faculty should be capable of both excellent health care and excellent scholarship. We must seek to define our common ground and not our differences. The idea of the Medical Center enhances this. As usual, Dr. Tenney, a consummate wordsmith, has previously put it well. "The purpose of the Medical Center is to improve the coordination and integration of the activities of its component institutions, to further the cause of clinical care through research and teaching, and simultaneously by recognizing the advantages of symbiotic communion to endow the whole with greater purpose and significance."

And President McLaughlin is also correct. The future of the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, in many ways, will be directly related to the energy and vision of those, regardless of employer, who are now bound together in a common medical faculty. Within the defined principles of that faculty, it is individual opinion and judgement which will make the difference. At 21, it behooves

us to know who we are and for what we strive.

My own view is that if our institutions can continue to pull together, the reward will be great and very much in the long tradition of our commonly rooted but recently independent histories. Then, in my judgement, the refunding will have become consonant with the founding — with the goals of the Cornish practitioner who first saw the value of medical education in these remote parts. In that Bob McCollum, our new dean, comes from another of Nathan Smith's medical schools, such an outcome would be an appropriate welcome! I expect January 1, 1982, to be a most propitious time.

### McCollum — from page 12

we've been friends and colleagues," Dr. Horstmann recalls. "Hepatitis is a very frustrating subject, but he has stuck with it through the years. He takes the long view of problems and sets about finding the answers to them. He has done everything from bench virology to enormous field studies, always combining high quality work with good judgement. He is an international authority.

"As an administrator, he has a remarkable capacity to keep six balls in the air at the same time. He does it all without getting weighed down by it. He is admired by all who know him, in fact I think he's the only person at this school whom everybody likes. There is a great balance to his whole life."

While Dr. McCollum is perhaps best known for his research, he has also compiled an impressive set of academic credentials. In 1958, he earned a diploma in public health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He returned to teaching appointments in both Yale's section of epidemiology and preventive medicine and its department of public health. In 1960, these two units were combined to form the present department of epidemiology and public health, which is also a department of Yale's graduate school and an accredited school of public health. In 1969, Dr. McCollum was appointed acting department chairman, a position that soon became permanent. Four years later he was named the Susan Dwight Bliss Professor of Epidemiology and in 1978 he was named a professor in Yale's Institute for Social and Policy Studies.

Besides his work at Yale, he is a member and past president of the American Epidemiological Association, a fellow of the American College of Epidemiology, a former member and chairman of the National Research Council's Committee on Viral Hepatitis, and a past chairman of the World

Health Organization's Group on Viral Hepatitis. He has contributed articles to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and many other publications. He has also contributed chapters on hepatitis to several books.

These then are the roles he has balanced — physician and administrator, scientist and teacher, epidemiologist and writer, and, of great importance to him, husband and father. He takes great pride in the accomplishments of his wife Audrey, a psychiatric social worker and author. A new edition of her book, *The Chronically Ill Child: A Guide for Parents and Professionals*, has just been published by Yale Press. The McCollums have two children: Cynthia, a graduate of Princeton and former assistant director of volunteer services at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, who is a graduate student in the Yale School of Organization and Management, and Douglas, a sophomore at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York.

At Dartmouth, the new dean will be balancing the same roles. It looks to be a perfect mating of man and job. This view is shared by Dr. Edward Harris, who chaired the search committee charged with identifying the best candidates for the job. "Deaning in the 1980s will offer the challenge to consolidate resources, to be innovative in designing creative programs with existing faculty, to develop a stimulating curriculum which is worth the many dollars that it costs, and to generate new sources of financial support from private as well as federal sources," he explains. "Bob McCollum will do that. He has the maturity, sensitivity and tact to make shrewd decisions. He has an openness and humility that enables him to communicate and understand. He has the academic credentials to speak with authority amidst the most accomplished and prolific of our medical scientists. And, perhaps more important, he has a highly developed and visible sense of humor."

### Cancer Center — from page 19

ing which patients are likely to benefit from glucocorticoid therapy. Says Dr. Munck, "We hope this knowledge will help avoid unnecessary treatment with its accompanying toxic side effects."

Dr. Munck and his colleagues, Paul Guyre, Ph.D., Gerald Crabtree, M.D., and Kendall Smith, M.D., have taken another approach to the problem of toxicity. They have found that glucocorticoids suppress Fc receptors (receptors for the Fc portion of immunoglobulins on the surface of macrophages, granulocytes and certain types of lympho-