—Dr. Vivien Thomas

Continued from page 1

which we always worked in, and I just walked down the main corridor without thinking.

"I actually stopped traffic. People stopped dead in their tracks. They had never seen a Negro in a white coat before. They had seen patients of course...it was a very long time before I wore a white coat again down that corridor."

As a boy growing up in his native Nashville, TN, Thomas had actually been born in New Iberia, LA, he determined to some day be a doctor, inspired by the kindly family doctor about whom he would later comment, "He was such a good man that I was determined to be like him."

And so the young boy set about on his dream of becoming a physician saving every penny he earned from parttime jobs.

He even took a summer job as an orderly in a private hospital, working sometimes 12 hours a day and absorbing a firsthand view of the medical profession on a daily basis.

Vivien later enrolled at Tennessee A&M College as a premed student during the late 1920's. Following his first semester there, the 1929 stock market crash swallowed up all of his personal finances forcing him to leave school.

From there he wandered in and out of odd jobs before landing a position as a laboratory helper at the Vanderbilt University Medical School.

Not long after arriving at Vanderbilt, he met his future lifelong collaborator Dr. Alfred Blalock in 1930.

Dr. Blalock immediately began introducing his young assistant to the surgical field teaching him the rudiments of operating procedures, how to "perform the chemical determinations needed for their experiments," to calculate and record the many experiments.

Eleven years later, Dr. Blalock was invited and accepted a job at Johns Hopkins Hospital as professor of surgery in 1941. It seemed only natural that his close professional confidant and the genius behind many of their experiments, Vivien Thomas, accompany him.

Soon after their arrival, the pair became engrossed in a series of experiments which later resulted in the now legendary "blue baby" operation.

It was Thomas who did the bulk of the preparatory research leading up to the operation--which involved bypassing constricted vessels leading from the heart--and who had already performed a similar surgical technique in hundreds of laboratory animals.

The patient on that fateful day in November 1944 was a young child. It would mark the first time that such a complex form of a heart surgery had been performed. The operation was a resounding success.

Though Thomas was not among the team of doctors involved in the "blue baby" operation (the team was headed by Dr. Blalock and Dr. Helen Taussig, the young surgical research technician was in the operating room as a chief advisor.

Beyond the circle of cardiac surgeons at Hopkins and those privy to the research efforts leading up to it (Thomas played a leading role in that research) news of his involvement in the history-making procedure went unheralded.

His role in pioneering numerous other srugical techniques and as an inventor of various surgical apparatuses would all go virtually unnoted.

But Dr. Thomas never seemed too concerned about being the man in the background, by all written accounts. He once reportedly declared that despite the fact that he was a non-doctor and a non-student, he had travelled a long way in the medical field.

He stated in 1971 that he was simply "part of the Hopkins family" and he seemed to love that idea.

During that same year a group of former surgical residents--the Old Hand Club--commissioned a portrait of him and turned it over to Hopkins. The painting hung for years in the entrance to the Blalock Building (named for his mentor who died in 1964).

Its whereabouts are unknown at this time since, according to a spokeswoman at Hopkins, it was removed from the surgical ward recently because of renovation work now underway.

He received an honorary degree from the Johns Hopkins University in 1976 in recognition of over three decades of service in the area of surgical research.

Any medical student, fellow, researcher or physician at Hopkins who was working on a paper or trying to develop a specific surgical technique within his realm of expertise invariably sought Dr. Thomas.

At the time of his 1979 retirement, Dr. Thomas was supervisor of the hospital's Surgical Research Laboratory. The title of Instructor Emeritus was bestowed upon him that same year.

* * *

Reaction to Dr. Thomas's death came from two of his former colleagues at Johns Hopkins Hospital who eulogized him on Wednesday.

"Vivien Thomas was almost legendary among cardiac surgeons. It is safe to say that there is not a cardiac surgeon over 40 who doesn't know of him and his tremendous contribution to the specialty," remarked Dr. Vincent Gott, a professor of cardiac surgery.

Said Dr. J. Alex Haller, Chief of Pediatric Cardiac Surgery, "This is a great loss. Dr. (Alfred) Blalock once said that Vivien Thomas's hands were more important to him in the development of the "blue baby" operation than his own. And he meant it."

* * *

A longtime member of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Dr. Thomas was honored at its "Man of the Year" in 1980.

He was also honored in 1981 by the Board of Trustees of Provident Hospital for his outstanding contributions to the field of medicine.

Shortly after his retirement in 1979, Dr. Thomas began working on his autobiography "Pioneering Research in Surgical Shock and Cardiovascular Surgery" soon to be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press later in the fall.

Dr. Thomas is survived by his wife, Mrs. Clara F. Thomas; two daughters, Mrs. Olga T. Norris and Mrs. Theodosia P. Rasberry, a brother, Maceo W. Thomas of Nashville, TN, and three granddaughters.

AFRO file photo of Dr. Vivien Thomas (center) at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

—Bare Hills community

Continued from page 1

said James Scott, leaning his wide six foot six inch frame back in a strained metal rocker.

"This has always been a quiet community. White folks and colored didn't have no trouble liking each other.

"If we needed anything they would give it to us but we never asked for anything.

"There was a one-room school house across the street, but that was for white folks. We went to school in Mt. Washington.

"Colored didn't have much to say in those days. Whatever the white man said-that went," he said.

Scott admitts that there were other black families to settle the area.

"There were the Gardmans and the Browns, too, but they should have named this area Scott's Hill," he said.

Winding footpaths connect the historic black community of small wood-framed houses perched along Falls Road in the Walnut Avenue area.

The area has lately become the focal point of a growing debate over where or whether to build a new access point to the Jones Falls Expressway between Northern Parkway and Ruxton Road.

As reported in the AFRO (11/14/85), the proposed I-83 interchange is intended to ease commuter traffic cutting through Mt. Washington.

"We don't want our community transformed into a Reisterstown or Liberty Road bonanza. We want to maintain the rural nature of this historic black community," asserted Mrs. Valerie Brown of the Pleasant View Civic Association, one of ten groups that make up the "No Build Option," coalition.

Observers reported 1000 people, including 11 elected officials showed up for a public meeting in Pikesville.

It was a heated session, according to organizers and Harry J. McCullough, chief of the Interstate Division for Baltimore City. It is an issue that is yet unresolved.

When James Scott was asked about the debate, he said that he was unfamiliar with it.

"All I know is that this is home," he said.

The AFRO plans to focus on the Scott family in February.

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By the way...

By Joe Black

There is no denying that Black America needs more doctors but ofttimes there are roadblocks in the path of those striving to make it to and through medical school. Well, in my travels, I have learned of a program that may help to overcome some of the problems. It's the *Medical Opportunity for Competitive Minority Students.*

Medical Opportunity for Competitive Minority Students is a facet of the Bowman Gray School of Medicine of Wake Forest University. This is not a giveaway program. There are some requirements such as a minimum of 90 undergraduate semester hours, with 8 semester hours each in general biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics considered as minimum science preparation. Each applicant must take the Medical College Admission Test that is sponsored by the Association of American Medical Colleges. The MCAT is given twice a year in the fall and in the spring. Applicants are encouraged to take the test in the spring so that the test can be taken again in the fall should an improved score be needed.

Financial aid through loans, or other forms of assistance, is available to students who would not otherwise attend medical school.

For additional information contact: Dr. Velma G. Watts, Director of the Office of Minority Affairs, Bowman Gray School of Medicine, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC 27103.

Dr. Velma Watts, Area Code (919) 748-4201.

Joe Black
Vice President
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Provident recovery plan receives $1 million from Governor Hughes

Provident Hospital, Inc. received $1 million from the State of Maryland on Nov. 12 and named a new chief financial officer as it moves to pull out of a crisis precipitated by the questionable management practices and a physician boycott over the last year.

Provident will use funds from the state to continue operations, while implementing a recovery plan developed by its trustee, George L. Russell, Jr., and a team of consultants.

"As the only black-managed and black-controlled hospital in Maryland, Provident has played a unique role in the state. In order to continue fulfilling that role, it must have the support of the 200 physicians who have privileges with us. Physicians must be willing to let us show them that their counsel is being acted upon," says Russell, "they must be prepared to admit their patients to Provident."

"We have a plan that will get us there," the trustee notes, adding that the appointment of the chief financial officer, Ronald L. Berg, is a major step in developing an experienced senior management team. Berg is currently based in the Philadelphia office of Coopers and Lybrand, one of the nation's leading accounting firms. Berg begins his new duties on Dec. 1.

Other components of the plan to which Russell refers include:

– The hospital staff will be immediately reduced by 136 full-time equivalent positions but none of the reductions will affect the total nursing complement nor any registered nurses directly. "The cuts will not affect patient care. In order to be viable, Provident must maintain standards of care equal to those of comparable hospitals," Russell explains.

–A request for a voluntary rate reduction of 10 percent, which takes Provident out of the category of hospitals classified as "high-cost" by the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission and represents savings of approximately $2.5 million to future patients. This makes the hospital more attractive to all patients, regardless of the source of payment used to cover hospital care.

– A 10 percent reduction in the cost of all contractual services.

– Consideration of an across the board salary reduction of 20 percent

– Implementation of management improvements called for by the Medical Staff to include a streamlined, revamped admitting function, institution of an efficient transcription service and a guest relations program.

– Development of a business plan which will provide for the long-term viability of the institution as an important asset to the black community.

– Development of a plan that will allow the institution to procure within 30 days needed technology such as a CT scanner and a muga scan.

-- Establishment of a hospital/physician joint venture corporation that will allow for the development of mutually profitable ventures.

– Continuation of an aggressive marketing campaign to win back the doctors whose patient admissions are essential to maintaining the targeted occupancy of 70 percent. Russell notes that the response to the initial month long effort indicates that census can be increased substantially.

"Calling on doctors in their offices provides them with an opportunity to tell us what they really need in order to admit patients, and it gives us an opportunity to tell them about our plans."

Russell notes that, at one point, the census went from a low of 38 percent to a high of 61 percent. There is every reason to believe that continued efforts will lead to stabilizing the census in the range of 70 percent, he says.

– Implementation of contracts with local Health Maintenance Organizations that will produce additional patient volume for the institution.

-- Initiation of a broad-based community support campaign that will reach individuals and groups throughtout the city and across the state.

– Continued recruitment of high quality administrative and supervisory personnel that will strengthen the overall management of the institution.

-- While strengthening the management team and systems, Provident's Trustee and consultants also are considering the merits of a linkage with another institution, with the concern being Provident's ability to retain its identity, name and role.

Russell acknowledges that employees are being asked "to perform well and make a sacrifice at the same time. However, the only black-managed hospital in the stage must demonstrate its ability to perform under the same pressures as other hospitals in Maryland—I believe that these employees are strong enough to help us turn this around. I think that employees share the belief that this is important in many ways. Provident is Baltimore's largest black - controlled employer of blacks, one of the few black-controlled hopsitals in the nation and the only one in the state. We can't expect others to save us. We must do that ourselves."

Scholarship Award of $500 from the Career Communications Group, Inc. is presented to Miss Delores Ford by John Black, assistant vice president, Maryland National Bank; at right is Tyrone D. Taborn, publisher.

Engineering student gets scholarship

A $500 scholarship award was presented to Miss Delores Floyd at a recent luncheon at the Engineers Club. She is a student in the Engineering School at Morgan State University. She was graduated from Western High School in 1984.

Tyrone Taborn, a graduate of Cornell University, is the publisher of Career Communications. One of his publications is U.S. Black Engineer. Mr. Taborn presents scholarships quarterly to deserving minority engineering students.

Dr. Eugene Deloatch, dean, School of Engineering at Morgan, the guest speaker, emphasized the need of minority engineers. "We must motivate our youth in this direction. Next to education, the engineering field is the largest employment profession," he said. America has a lot of catching up, as countries such as Germany and Japan are graduating a higher percentage of engineers and therefore progressing faster in technology," he added.

Former Judge William H. Murphy, Jr., closed the program by saying, "We must meet the competitive challenge of our time, a challenge to motivate our youngsters into the engineering profession where minority involvement is far below average."

More convictions for unemployment fraud

Johnny Edwards, 35, of Baltimore County, was one of ten Maryland residents found guilty, in October, 1985, of illegally accepting unemployment insurance benefits.

Mr. Edwards, in particular, was sentenced to 90 days in jail after drawing 21 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits totaling $1,680 while working.

All the guilty claimants were prosecuted separately for not reporting their earnings for working during the same time they collected unemployment insurance benefits totaling $14,893.

The majority of the fraudulent claims were reported to the Department of Employment and Training through anonymous tips or detected through Crossmatch. Crossmatch is a computerized system that compares benefits paid with employer wage reports made by employers to the Maryland Department of Employment and Training.

In addition to the convictions, 29 requests to investigate possible fraudulent collections of unemployment insurance benefits were made during October 1985 through the Unemployment Insurance Fraud Hotline (1-800-492-6804).

The state also obtained 28 judgments against individuals who had outstanding overpayments of unemployment insurance benefits.

Claimants found to have intentionally made false statements to get or to increase unemployment insurance benefits are prosecuted for fraud by the State's Attorney in their respective jurisdictions. If found guilty, claimants can be fined between $50 and $500, sentenced up to 90 days in jail for each check fraudulently received, ordered to repay the full amount of benefits illegally received, ordered to pay court costs and may lose all eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits for one year.

Caucus of black state legislators in confab

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators will hold a press conference on Tuesday, Dec. 3 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. to kick off its Ninth Annual Conference being held in Philadelphia from Dec. 3-8 at the Hershey Hotel.

Conference chairman state Rep. David P. Richardson (Pa.); Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus chairman, state Rep. Peter Truman; and city officials will join NBCSL president, Maryland state Sen. Clarence M. Mitchell, III, for the briefing. Members of the NBCSL Executive Committee will attend as well.

The conference theme, "The Politics of Black Economic Independence," reflects the highest-ranking concern facing black state legislators and is the focus of workshops and general sessions throughout the six-day meetings.

Key speakers include U.S. Rep. William H. Gray (D-Pa), chairman of the House Budget Committee; Anheuser - Busch chairman August Busch; Trans-Africa's Randall Robinson and Susan L. Taylor, editor-in-chief of Essence magazine.

The media are invited to cover all conference sessions; however, credentials must be obtained prior to attending. For information about the credentials, the press conference as well as other events, contact Linda Grant at (202) 624-5457.

Black wax museum is moving to new site

Great Blacks In Wax Museum, Inc., America's first and only Afro-American wax museum, has moved from 207 W. Saratoga St. to an office location on 880 Washington Blvd. The museum simply outgrew the limited space on Saratoga Street; and it is in the process of seeking a larger facility in its efforts to triple its size.

While it is in a transition stage, the museum will put on exhibitions, but will be temporarily closed to tours. It will be open to tours during January and February, 1986 to display some of the new exhibits and innovations to be featured in its permanent location.

The primary objective of the museum in its office location on Washington Boulevard will be to raise the $100,000 it needs to match a state grant of $100,000 for expansion purposes.

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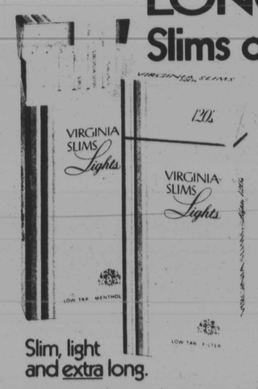

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