

Obituary



WALTER F. SCHALLER, M.D.
(1879–1970)

Dr. Walter F. Schaller, one of the most outstanding neurologists of his generation, died suddenly on October 20, 1970, at his Bohemian Club residence in San Francisco. For many years Doctor Schaller was one of the most highly respected teachers of neurology in the western United States.

After attending the University of Virginia, he graduated in 1902 from Cooper Medical College, which later became the Stanford University School of Medicine in San Francisco. Following his graduation he served successively as ship's surgeon in the merchant marine, assistant in pathology at

Cooper, and medical officer in the United States Navy, chiefly on the USS RELIEF, the first ocean-going American hospital ship. During the 3 years from 1908–1911, he studied and worked in pathology, general medicine, and neurology at several of the leading centers of Europe. His teachers in neurology included Dejerine, Babinski, Oppenheim, Barré, and Vincent.

After this European training, Doctor Schaller returned to San Francisco to join the faculty at Stanford Medical School. Through the years he published a large number of articles and textbook

chapters based on his own research and observation. He was known particularly for his work on motor disorders, myelitis, stroke, cerebral concussion, post-traumatic neurosis, spinal cord injuries, and multiple sclerosis. He was among the first to report the reversibility of subacute combined degeneration in the early stages following adequate treatment.

In addition to his teaching activities, he had a large private practice in neuropsychiatry. In San Francisco, Doctor Schaller was uncontestedly the leading consultant in his specialty. Following his attaining emeritus status at Stanford, he was a prime mover in stimulating the academic growth of a number of departments of neurology and psychiatry at several public and private hospitals in the San Francisco area.

Doctor Schaller was on the committee that founded the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology in 1938. He also served as a senior consultant in neurology for the Veterans Administration and was on the Medical Advisory Board of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society at the time of its organization. For two successive years (1944-46) he was president of the American Neurological Association.

Doctor Schaller always deplored the tendency toward separation between neurology and psychia-

try, and predicted their eventual reunion on the basis of fundamental research in neurophysiology and neurochemistry.

Always quiet and reserved in public, he was known for his sense of humor, and had a wide circle of warm personal friends, both within and outside the profession. His personal interests included golf, chess, dominoes and a wide knowledge and appreciation of fine wines.

Although he was not a serious book collector or bibliophile, Doctor Schaller had a most intense interest in books. Portions of his extensive personal library were contributed to Stanford University and other institutions. On March 7, 1972, the medical library of the St. Francis Memorial Hospital of San Francisco was named to honor his memory.

It was characteristic of Doctor Schaller that on the day before his death he spent several hours at his office, attending to personal correspondence and joking with the staff. At the time of his death he was the oldest member of the American Neurological Association, which had made him an honorary member in 1965. His passing marks the close of an important chapter in the history of American neurology.

LEON J. WHITSELL