

“Spiderman” Unveiled: A Tribute

Herbert L. Fred

In the comic strip and movie, Spiderman is the good guy who fights evil with supernatural ability that he gains from a spider bite. His identity, however, is kept secret. In this report, I call attention to, and unveil, a real “Spiderman” whose supernatural intellect and curiosity enabled him to become *the* authority on a common clinical finding—the cutaneous arterial spider.

How did I get interested in spiders and such things and why must I write about them? . . . Suffice it to say here that I was discouraged and a little disillusioned that none of my splendid clinical teachers at Johns Hopkins, Harvard or Cincinnati could answer my annoying questions about spiders. I began to collect data, studying spiders wherever I found them, approaching them from all sides and in all places. . . . Thus I learned of the comings and goings of spiders, something of their natural history, and their ecology (1).

Born on November 8, 1909, this man graduated from the University of Virginia School of Medicine and did residency training at Johns Hopkins Hospital and Cincinnati General Hospital. For 22 years—1948 to 1970—he was Chairman, Department of Internal Medicine, at The University of Iowa College of Medicine.

His curriculum vitae totaled 200 typewritten pages, listing 527 articles, 118 books or book chapters, 693 book reviews, and more than 800 formal lectures. Though known best for his work in nutrition, rare diseases, myocardial infarction, and the history of medicine, this man was equally at home in the classroom, at the bedside, or in the laboratory.

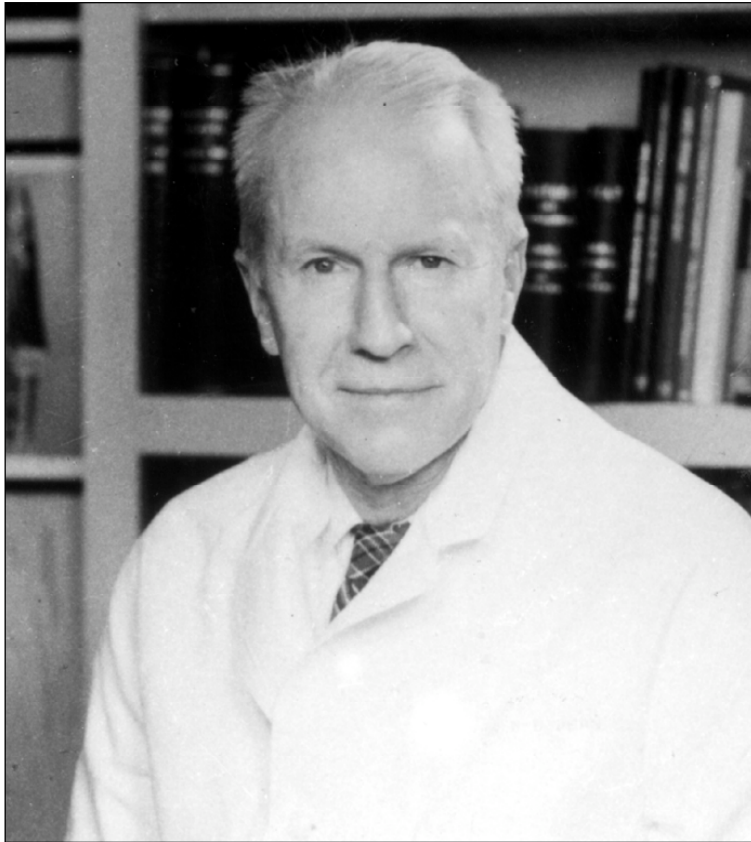
Among his countless memberships, offices, and honors were: initial President of the American Osler Society; consultant to the Surgeon General, U.S. Army; Fellow, Royal Society of Medicine, London; and President, American Clinical and Climatological Association.

For five years, he was Editor-in-Chief of the *Archives of Internal Medicine* and for 14 years was Editor of *Stedman’s Medical Dictionary*. He was a contributing editor to *Encyclopedia Britannica* and Associate Editor or member of the editorial boards of many medical journals and other distinguished publications.

On March 1, 1989, cancer ended his glorious career. As a consequence, the medical world lost a rare talent, a true giant. And I lost a true friend—William Bennett Bean.

Dr. Bean’s picture and pertinent references appear on page 54 of this issue.

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William Bennett Bean, M.D.

References

1. Bean WB. *Vascular Spiders and Related Lesions of the Skin*. Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Illinois, 1958; 372 pp, vii.
2. Bean WB. The cutaneous arterial spider: a survey. *Medicine*, 1945; 24:243-331.
3. Bean WB. The arterial spider and similar lesions of the skin and mucous membrane. *Circulation*, 1953; 8:117-129.