

Dr. Thomas Hannum

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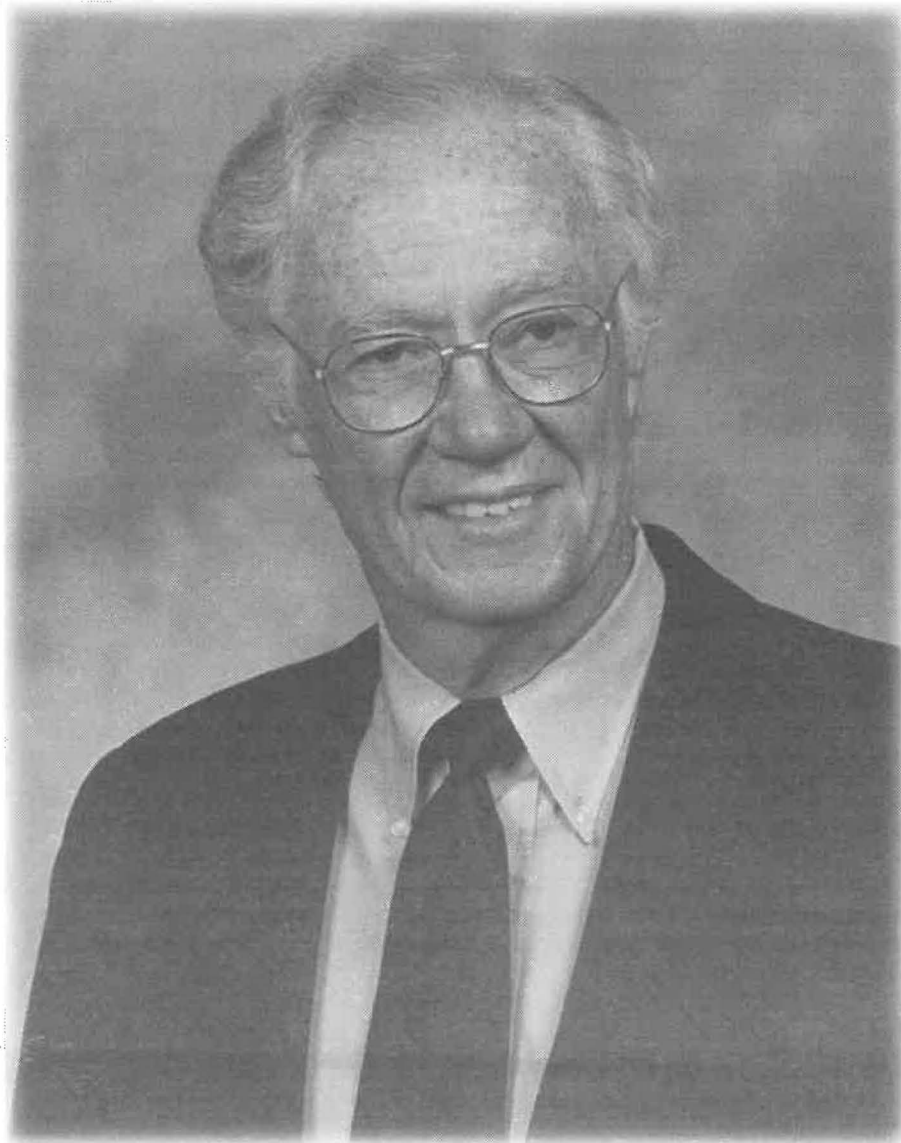
Dr. Thomas Hannum has two heroes: Dr. Albert Schweitzer and Tarzan. Schweitzer makes the cut of course, because "he could have become very rich and renowned, but at age 35 he devoted his life to helping the unfortunate," Hannum says. Why Tarzan? "He's a primitive, noble man who espoused noble ideas of self-reliance and strength," Hannum says. "He was the original ecologist and environmentalist."

Hannum, who can boast of having met one of his heroes in person, was born to a pioneer doctor father and a schoolteacher mother who homesteaded in Gillette. They had come from Wisconsin and Illinois, respectively, and they met in Wyoming, and Hannum says, "I don't think anyone in the world ever had better parents."

He made the decision to attend UW hardly realizing it was a decision. "I was so green I didn't know there was anywhere else," he says. "When I got there, I thought UW was the biggest thing in the universe." He had never wanted to be anything except a doctor, like his father, so he was in premed while participating in many different organizations including Iron Skull and Kappa Sigma. "UW was the most wonderful institution in the world," he says. "I loved it from the moment I got there."

He went on to the University of Rochester for medical school with the help of Dr. Floyd Clark. Having done his own Ph.D. there, Clark maintained a working relationship with the dean of the medical school there, and every year he'd send a couple of UW students.

Besides completing his medical degree, Hannum also met his future wife, Alida, in Rochester. "She is smarter and more sophisticated and



knows so much more about so many things than I do," Hannum says of her. "I'm very lucky."

Hannum spent three and a half years in the Air Force, much of that time in Germany, before settling down to start his practice. He never expected to do so in Brigham City, Utah, but some of his connections from UW changed the course of his plans.

Hannum's brother, Marshall (who was also known as Jed) had served in the Navy during WWII, and then came back to school, as many veterans did. He was also in premed, and he studied with a group of other veterans. Hannum began studying with them. "They took me under their wing," Hannum says. "One of the reasons we did so well was these guys were dead serious." The group helped each other through the toughest subjects, such as organic chemistry and embryology.

His brother went on to do a surgical residency in Ogden, Utah. While there, he heard about a practice for sale in Brigham City, and Otto Smith, another member of the veteran study group at UW, bought it. Smith persuaded Hannum to come to Utah and give it a try. In 1959 he did so, and has happily remained there ever since.

Not that he hasn't managed to see the world too. After five years of general practice, Hannum was making a house

call when he happened to see a program about the HOPE (that's Health Opportunities for People Everywhere) ship. It was a WWII destroyer outfitted as a hospital whose purpose was to visit countries in need of help with their medical system, and to train personnel there.

Hannum signed up and went on a three-month tour with the ship. When his time was up, he made a trip to Gabon, so that he could meet one of his lifelong heroes, Albert Schweitzer. "It was an overwhelming experience to see this man," Hannum says. "It was the closest I will ever come to a saint."

His volunteer experiences were just beginning. Two years later Hannum set off again, serving with the American Medical Association Volunteer Physicians for Vietnam. In 1970, he went to St. Lucia with AMDOC, and his whole family too. He took his daughter along when he spent time working at the Monument Valley Navajo Hospital and one of his sons went to Honduras with Hannum when he worked with Amigos de los Americanos.

His experiences were both good and bad. "It was great for me," he says. "It made me a better person. It gave me a greater appreciation of the medical inequalities throughout the world.

"Schweitzer coined a phrase, 'The

fellowship of those who have known the mark of pain," Hannum says. "Pain brings us all together. It's a universal sensation we've all had. Having seen it first-hand makes you more sensitive to the needs of others."

The bad part was that "the overwhelming experience in all five efforts I made was a feeling of sadness at the poverty and lack of opportunity and the abysmal condition of the health delivery systems." In some places, the average life expectancy was only in the 30s and 40s. "Looking back, I wonder if very much has really changed. In my particular situation, because of the limitations of my own talents, I was able to help some individuals on a one-to-one basis. But you're not making a dent in the overall need."

Even after he'd returned to Utah, the world continued to come to Hannum through his many years of involvement with the Experiment in International Living. "It was an outgrowth of an experiment in WWII," Hannum says. "People got together and made an effort to create peace through cultural exchange." Students and adults both could participate, and the Hannums placed 300 people in their own little town and sent many people abroad. The couple adopted several children they met through these activities, and put them through school, including an Iraqi boy and a French girl.

After 42 years as a physician, Hannum has hung up his stethoscope. Now his time is filled with helping raise two grandsons after the sudden death of his daughter's husband, and sharing with them two of his favorite pastimes, horseback riding and downhill skiing.

Hannum continues to make time, as he always has, for service to the community he loves. His accomplishments and recognitions are many. He was on the first board of directors for Hospice in northern Utah. He built a medical office building next to the hospital, offering a variety of medical services there for the convenience of his patients. He's been chairman of the board for the hospital several times, and has served on the board of directors for the Utah Heart Association and the Utah Lung Association. The Chamber of Commerce gave him its Total Citizen Award. He was given the A.H. Robbins Award from the Utah Medical Association, a recognition given annually to a physician for unselfish contributions to his community.

In 1999, he was the first Utah recipient of the Masonic Hall of Fame Award, given to a non-Mason. In their accompanying text, Amity Lodge No. 23, Free and Accepted Masons of Brigham City, made a note that seems to reflect well Hannum's life: "Not only has his service brought a better quality of life to thousands in our community but he has demonstrated in the strongest possible manner the brotherhood of

