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THE PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, INC.

Celebration of Tenth Anniversary
of Founding of the Institute
Monday, April 21, 1952
at the
New York Academy of Medicine
2 East 103rd Street, New York, N. Y.

Introductory Remarks By:

Michael Heidelberger, Ph.D.
Chairman of the Research Council

In skimming through the ten years of history of the Public Health Research Institute, I shall spend very little time glorifying the past. It is far more important that we get on with our scientific program, which will show you what the Institute's staff is accomplishing now and thus, what it augurs for the future.

As far back as 1893, Drs. Hermann Biggs and William Hallock Park realized that able men and women could not be attracted to the Bureau of Laboratories of New York City's Health Department unless they were given the opportunity of carrying on research. Dr. Park's own brilliant results in the control of diphtheria and milk-borne diseases brought in funds from various sources and these were administered by New York University, where Dr. Park held the post of Professor of Bacteriology. During the first forty years of intensive work, diphtheria almost vanished from the city, aided not only by determined campaigns for active immunization but also by Banzhaf's purification of diphtheria antitoxin, which made the treatment of cases easier and safer. Park's strenuous efforts also led to general pasteurization of milk in the city, the virtual elimination of the bovine tubercle bacillus as a cause of morbidity among the city's children and a great diminution in milk-borne epidemics of streptococcal diseases. Also, the careful typing of pneumococci by Georgia Cooper and Annabel Walter -- the latter still an active worker in the Bureau of Laboratories -- greatly increased the knowledge of this important group of microorganisms and pointed the way to the extension of therapy by type-specific antisera produced in the rabbit that offered the only hope of cure of pneumonia until the introduction of the sulfa drugs.

Meanwhile, the Convalescent Serum Laboratory, under Dr. William Thalhimer, was steadily increasing its distribution of sera for the modification of measles and scarlet fever and was winning recognition from medical practitioners all over the Greater City. Under way at this time, also, was the first large-scale test of BCG vaccination under Park, Mishulow and associates.

By this time, the management of expanding research funds became burdensome for the aging Dr. Park and a group of workers from research institutions and medical schools of the city was organized as Health Research, Inc., to take over this chore in 1936. I am proud to have been one of the incorporators and to have been connected with this fund in its transformations into the flourishing Public Health Research Institute of the present day.

This remarkable transmutation, as you have noted, occurred when atomic energy was only a vague promise and even before energy-rich phosphate bonds were known to carry us safely through our oxidations and reductions. Vigorous personalities, energetic minds and wise counsellors were required as catalysts. Time will permit naming only a few responsible for the original idea of a Public Health Research Institute operated by the City of New York and its ultimate execution: in alphabetical order, Dr. George Baehr, Mr. David M. Heyman, who first dreamed of what such an Institute could do and was Chairman of the Board of Directors during the ten-year period we are celebrating, the late Mayor La Guardia, Dr. Ralph S. Muckenfuss, in whose office the Research Council held so many meetings and whose quiet, common sense was a reliable guide, former Health Commissioner John L. Rice, Dr. Thomas M. Rivers, Chairman of the Institute's Research Council during the ten-year period

and a tower of strength in the choice of the Institute's staff and determination of its general policies. Nor must I forget Mr. Max Birnkrant and Mr. Francis J. Bloustein, whose keen knowledge of law always kept us within the bounds of what we could do and what we could not do.

I shall not review the early work of the Institute, as this will be done briefly during the luncheon session, but I cannot close without a grateful word to Mr. Roger C. Elliot for his apparently effortless and good-humored management of the complex details of running the business affairs of the Institute, and another in tribute to the memory of Dr. Walter W. Palmer, the first full-time Director of the Institute. His two years in office eased the growing pains of the new organization and made it a smoothly functioning, harmonious and happy place in which to work. Also, a friendly nod to Dr. L. Whittington Gorham, the new Director, who, at the very beginning of his term, has already made great contributions to the welfare of the Institute.

With this introductory setting of the scene, let us now see what action is taking place upon the stage.