

Gayfree Ellison

PIONEER UNIVERSITY PHYSICIAN

BY JOHN ALLEY

DOCTOR GAYFREE ELLISON was born in Wallace county, Kansas, October 29, 1875 and died at Norman, Oklahoma, December 23, 1932. His untimely death ended a career of devoted service to the University of Oklahoma, covering nearly a quarter century. During this period he had risen in rank from assistant state bacteriologist to professor of bacteriology and hygiene and director of student health service in the University of Oklahoma, and had endeared himself to students, faculty and fellowmen to a degree seldom attained in the annals of a great university.

It would seem that Mother Nature had ordained this blond-haired, blue-eyed Norseman for a life of pioneer service to his fellowmen through a carefully prearranged schedule of circumstance, heredity, and environment. His mother was a Swedish maiden, born in the eastern portion of that famous peninsula of Northern Europe. His father was born in Norway on the western side of the peninsula. Thus, the blood of both branches of this hardy old race of Vikings was mingled, in equal parts, in the veins of Gayfree Ellison.

While the future parents of Doctor Ellison were children of tender years the two families, unknown to each other, true to the pioneer instinct of their race, took the sea-path of Lief Erickson westward across the North Atlantic to the shores of America and established themselves in the same community of western Kansas. Taking up homestead-claims, they quickly transformed the prairie sod into virgin wheat fields, and prospered. In the course of years the two children met, loved, married, and became the parents of the three Ellison children, Ellida, Gayfree and Carl.

Soon after the birth of Carl, the mother died. The father, now a well-to-do farmer, later took the three children to the town of Lindsborg, placing them in the care of his good friend Squire Lind. Funds for their education in the public schools, Bethany academy, and college, were made available and the father returned to the direction of his farm and

ranch lands in Wallace county, near the Colorado line. A few years later the father met a tragic death and Squire Lind became the administrator of the estate, charged with the primary responsibility for the education of the children. The elder sister, Ellida, at her maturity, married Professor Abercrombie, director of the commercial department of Bethany college, and shared in a motherly way, along with good Squire Lind, the responsibility in the direction of the education of the younger brothers.

After entering Bethany academy and throughout his preparatory and college course, Gayfree lived in the college dormitory. His summer vacations were spent on the ranch-estate of his late father, which environment carried a strong appeal to the pioneering spirit of the young student. The outdoor life on the western Kansas plains during these summer months, together with his wholesome habits of clean living, contributed much to the building up of a physique which made possible the later arduous career of Gayfree Ellison.

Among his college mates, Gayfree early acquired an esteemed confidence, inspired by his even-tempered good sense, his keen intellect and his balanced judgment. He was anything but pushful in his social relationships; always the quiet-mannered, reticent, soft-voiced, Scandinavian, he tended strictly to his own business as a serious minded, industrious student. These sterling qualities did not escape the notice of his fellow students, despite his reticence, and they came to a full appreciation of his value as a counsellor and friend. When vexatious problems of student relationships arose, the undergraduates of Bethany college were glad to "leave it to Ellison."

As the closing weeks of Ellison's senior year approached, the Spanish-American War broke dramatically upon the country and the world. During his boyhood, Gayfree had listened in rapt attention to the tales his father had told of the stirring years when "Bleeding Kansas" was struggling toward a free statehood. The call of President Lincoln

for volunteers to save the union carried an irresistible appeal to the freedom-loving young Scandinavian immigrant. Already a partisan in the Kansas free soil conflict, he knew that "saving the union" meant freedom for an enslaved race, although the exigencies of national policy kept the latter issue in the background until the middle part of the civil war period. So he had promptly volunteered and the stories of civil war experiences had been vividly impressed on the eager mind of the boy.

The fighting blood of his father's race quickened its course through the veins of Gayfree Ellison when the clarion call of "Cuba Libre" rang through the land. Text books were immediately laid aside and on the morning of May 2, 1898, when the long line of eager applicants formed before the recruiting office at Salina, Kansas, Gayfree Ellison was standing impatiently well to the front of the column. His turn for the physical examination came quickly and the examining surgeon found young Ellison "fit as a fiddle,"—though many of his fellow applicants were turned down. The Kansas quota of volunteers was quickly filled from the wealth of fighting material which responded to the war call in the Jayhawk state. On May 10, Ellison and his thousand comrades were mustered into the service of the United States at Camp Leedy, Topeka, Kansas, to become the "Twentieth Kansas Volunteer Infantry." In the commencement exercises at Bethany college, four weeks later, there was a vacant chair in the line of the senior class, but the patriotic authorities of the college awarded the diploma to Private Gayfree Ellison, 20th Kansas, in absentia.

A strange turn of fate changed the whole career of this Kansas infantry regiment. Though known as the "Twentieth" it was actually the first regiment of Kansas volunteers in the Spanish-American War. Since nineteen Kansas regiments had been organized during the Civil War, the state decided to continue the numbering consecutively and the three Spanish War regiments were numbered the Twentieth, the Twenty-First and the Twenty-Second, respectively. As this first regiment organized was intended to be rushed to the mobilization camp at Tampa, Florida, for early service in Cuba, Governor Leedy had passed over the senior officers of the Kansas National Guard and given the Colonel's commission to Fredrick Funston, a young Kansas university alumnus, who had recently returned from Cuba where he had served as a filibustering soldier-of-fortune with the insurgent army.

The interesting incident which changed the career of Funston and the Twentieth Kansas, also changed the history of America in world affairs. On the very morning when the Kansas recruiting of-

office was opened at Salina, May 2, 1898, the newspapers of the world carried screaming headlines announcing the astounding victory of Commodore Dewey at Manila Bay on the previous day. The war growing out of our Cuban intervention was now destined to be fought on two fronts, on opposite sides of the globe.

Hardly was the muster-in ceremony of the Twentieth Kansas completed when Colonel Funston, still wearing civilian clothes, got a telegram from Washington directing him to report personally at Tampa, Florida for a conference with Generals Miles and Schafter. While Funston was speeding toward Tampa another telegram arrived at Topeka directing the Twentieth Kansas to entrain for San Francisco. So the regiment went one direction while its colonel went the other. Arriving at Tampa, Funston was summoned before the commanding general of the American forces. At the close of the conference General Miles coolly informed Funston that since his regiment was enroute for San Francisco the place of the colonel was with his regiment. The Cuban filibustering experience evidently had not impressed the American commander as significant and Colonel Funston now hurried westward across the continent to join his regiment at the Presidio.

The rest of the story of the "Fighting Twentieth" is writ large in the military annals of America. It is a tale of heroism and sacrifice which moves, and thrills, and grips the heart. It is too long a story to find a place in a brief sketch of the life of one Kansas boy who later became the organizer of student health service in the University of Oklahoma. Suffice it to say that this regiment remained in the thick of the fighting which broke on the outskirts of Manila on the night of February 4, 1899, and continued through the spring and summer of that year, when the organized opposition of the Philippine Insurgents was broken and the fighting passed into the guerrilla stage.

During these five months of bitter warfare the Twentieth Kansas participated in twenty battles, all victories followed by forward movements. The regiment lost heavily. Colonel Funston was wounded, decorated for gallantry in action, and promoted to Brigadier General. Major Wilder Metcalf, commanding Ellison's battalion was wounded and promoted to colonel. The captain of Ellison's company (Company "M"), was promoted to major and this company lost, in killed and wounded, more than fifty per cent of its strength.

We even of the older generation of the university who knew Ellison for upwards of two decades heard from his own lips scarcely a word of this military romance of his youthful career. Some

of us who enjoyed closer contacts with his daily life, knew in a general way that he cherished dearly the memory of these thrilling incidents. But it was not Ellison's way to broadcast his own story of accomplishments, thrilling or commonplace. Most of his close friends who read this sketch will learn for the first time these interesting facts.

Returning from the islands in the late fall of 1899, Ellison immediately took up his interrupted educational career. The trying ordeal he had passed through in his tropical service, in rain and heat and mud, underfed and over-clothed—his regiment went into action in "army blue woollens"—had seriously impaired his rugged and wiry physique. But he lost no time in undertaking and completing his professional training at Rush Medical college, Chicago, where he received the degree of doctor of medicine in the spring of 1903. The next two years were spent as interne in Augustana hospital, Chicago, where he served under the direction of the famous surgeon, Doctor Ochsner.

The years of 1906 to 1908 were spent in the practice of medicine at Muskegon, Michigan. But the call of the plain country would not be denied. From his Canadian border land Doctor Ellison visualized the prairies of the Southwest, the environment of his childhood and youth, and he responded to the call. The fall of 1908 saw him established in the practice of his profession at Oklahoma City. Two years later the University of Oklahoma school of medicine offered him an appointment as assistant state bacteriologist and he accepted. The remaining twenty-two years of his life were employed in the service of the university.

This twenty-two year period of service on the university campus was briefly interrupted during the closing year of the World War when Doctor Ellison was commissioned a captain in the Medical Corps of the United States army. This commission was eagerly accepted for it recalled to Doctor Ellison the memory thrills of his Philippine military career. These months of 1918 were spent at Chickamauga Park, Georgia, and in the military hospitals of New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. Of course Captain Ellison was disappointed because he failed to get across to the western front, and after the Armistice he was glad to return to the service of the university.

Returning to the campus at the close of the war, Doctor Ellison threw himself again into his career work with renewed vigor. During the following decade he completed the organization of the university health service and had the gratification of seeing the consummation of his plans in the construction of the modernly equipped, up-to-date student

infirmary located at the southwestern extremity of the present group of university buildings, known as Hygeia Hall.

The same year that saw the completion of this building, 1927-8, also marked the transfer of the entire four year medical course to Oklahoma City. Although Doctor Ellison was tendered a full time professorship in the medical faculty at Oklahoma City he preferred to remain with the more arduous work of the student health service which he had given so many years of his life in building. He also had come to love Norman dearly, and felt that his family, Mrs Ellison and the two children, to whom he was passionately devoted, would be happier if he remained with the work in close contact with the home to which they had become so attached.

It was in the final stage of his career that the real fighting spirit of Doctor Ellison displayed its heroism. In December, 1931, he himself became conscious of the attack of the malignant cancerous growth which took his life a year later. The following spring he underwent an explorative operation on his abdomen. The attending surgeons merely confirmed his own diagnosis. The growth had penetrated the extent of his liver and no attempt was made to remove it.

A chastened and saddened university community accepted the final decree and awaited the end in stoic silence. But the spirit of the Norseman in Doctor Ellison rallied to the fight and the community looked on in amazement as Doctor Ellison organized his counter attack upon his attacker. As the summer months came and went Doctor Ellison pressed forward in what seemed a winning drive. He actually left his bed and took to his automobile. On the streets of Norman, at the country club, and on the lawn and porch of his home his friends and neighbors saw him, enjoyed his cheerful conversation and marvelled.

But even the unconquerable spirit of the Norse Viking eventually will meet its nemesis. Early in October, 1932, Doctor Ellison suffered a hemorrhage. He was taken to the infirmary where every human resource and attention was summoned to his relief. It could not now be denied that he was failing rapidly, but throughout October and November he still fought on. Furthermore, from his sick bed he continued to direct infirmary service, his last efforts being spent in ministering to his fellow beings, his students. On December 5 hope was abandoned by everyone but Ellison. He was removed to his home and the end was awaited. On the night of December 22, Doctor Ellison roused himself and began to talk of recovery. He averred that he had no fear of death, but he wanted so much to go on living, enjoying the loving presence of his dear

children and their devoted mother. Why shouldn't he live?

At the break of dawn on the following morning the fighting soul of Doctor Ellison passed quietly over to join his fathers.

The present efficient system of university student health service is the work of Doctor Ellison; his child grown to maturity. To it he devoted a life-

time of skilled, patient and arduous effort. He gave it life and then he gave his life for it. The building which houses that service is the symbol of his success: the emblem of his devotion. In re-naming this building "Ellison Infirmary" the university would at once do honor to itself, to its late physician, and to the ideal of long, faithful and efficient service.

The comet discovery

BY ARNOLD COURT, '32

MAYBE it was just 100,000 years ago, when primitive men were in the beginning of the Stone Age, and maybe it was 2,000,000 years ago, when Model T dinosaurs were being scrapped for Model A mammals with free-wheeling and stream-lining. The exact date cannot be fixed, but sometime between those two extremes there happened in the Carolinas an event whose possibility has intrigued astronomers for centuries. A comet hit the earth—or so two University of Oklahoma professors believe.

From Norfolk, Virginia to Savannah, Georgia, is about 450 miles. The ground is flat, very sandy, and elevated but a few feet above the Atlantic. Much of it is marshy. Throughout the whole territory there are low, long hills, roughly circular or semicircular, enclosing swampy land lower than that of the plain outside the hills. These curious formations have been known ever since the days of Cromwell, when the fleeing English nobility tried its hand at taking the land away from the Indians.

Locally these holes are called "bays." Most of them are between 500 and 8,000 feet across, and with their bounding hills 200 feet wide at the base and only a few feet high, are usually unnoticed by the ordinary man, doing his best to keep out of the ooze. To him there is nothing startling about the formation, because he cannot see all of it.

Back in 1895 one L. C. Glenn described them in a magazine article, and admitted he was at a loss to account for them. Whereupon the world promptly forgot about them—if it had paid any attention in the first place. It remained for two professors in a university which had just then begun operation to point out forty years later the most probable cause of these curious phenomena.

Dr. F. A. Melton, associate professor of geology in the University of Oklahoma, is one of the country's leading au-

thorities in the application of aerial photography to geology. The Fairchild Aerial Survey co-operates with him in the educational phase of this work. In 1930 the Survey brought to his attention a mosaic map of a 200-square-mile area on the South Carolina coast, upon which these bays stood out very strikingly.

Dr. Melton called in Dr. William Schriever, professor of physics, and the two tried to discover the cause of these startling formations. Map study and field trips in June, 1931, and August, 1932, revealed that:

1. The region of occurrence is about 40,000 square miles of the Atlantic coastal plain.
2. The individual depressions are smoothly elliptical in shape.
3. The long axes of all the depressions are parallel, and all run northwest-southeast.
4. Elevated rims completely encircle some of the depressions.
5. An elevated rim is invariably higher at the southeastern end.
6. There is a general increase of ellipticity with size.
7. Double and triple rims exist.
8. Depressions intersect each other; completeness of outline is maintained sometimes by the larger, sometimes by the smaller.
9. The depressions are at least as old as the Pamlico terrace of late Pleistocene age and younger than the Waccamaw formation of Pliocene age.

After trying all sorts of hypotheses, ranging from action of ocean currents to explosions of swamp gas, from prehistoric mound-builders to volcanic explosions, the two Oklahoma professors constructed an intriguing story.*

A big, happy family of rocks was going sightseeing through the sky. Technically, when a gang of rocks, ranging in size from dust particles to objects a couple hundred miles in diameter, goes along

playing tag at 25 or 30 miles per second, astronomers call it a comet. Comets are not solid. Stars can be seen right through them, through their very center. They all shine by reflected light from the sun. Some have tails which also reflect light, some don't.

This particular bunch of rocks was at least 400 miles in diameter, and like everything else running around loose in the sky, was round. They had been by a good many times before, but nobody was home. This time, however, the earth was right in the way, and they just couldn't resist the invitation to drop in. They came in from the northwest, at an angle of approximately 45 degrees. In the four or five seconds it took them to drop through the atmosphere, the air slowed them down quite a bit—from around twenty-five to some five or ten miles per second—and made them quite hot under the collar.

Now when any round body hits a yielding surface from an angle, it will make an oval, or elliptical, hole. And that's what all these rocks, big and little, did when they sat down. They splattered the dirt out on all sides, ploughed on to the southeast a little, and pushed the rim on that side a little higher. The bigger rocks, being a bit harder to stop, made their holes proportionately longer than those of the little fellows.

For the same reason that one rock will leave an elliptical scar, the whole crowd, being also roughly round in shape, will fall over an elliptical area similar in shape and direction to any individual scar. The bigger fellows, having more momentum, will be slowed up less by the air and tend to go to the far end of the ellipse, leaving the little guys to fall ignominiously in the near end. And since the gang is spherical, some will hit after others, distorting, overlapping or partially destroying scars made by their companions a second before.

Scars are found all the way from Savannah to Norfolk, along a line practically parallel with the short axes of the ellipses. In similar territory in Georgia no traces were found, but the territory north of Norfolk is so broken up by bays and rivers that some scars, as yet undiscovered, may exist there. Assuming, however, that the line through the proven area is all there is, and furthermore that it is the widest point of the whole great ellipse, Doctor Melton and Doctor Schriever found that, at the very least, the comet must have covered the area from

*A report of their findings, "On the Possible Meteoric Origin of the Carolina 'Bays,'" was read last Christmas by Doctor Melton before the Geological Society of America in Boston, and by Doctor Schriever before a joint meeting of the American Astronomical Association and the astronomy section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Atlantic City. The paper appears in the January *Journal of Geology*.