

Helen Dudley Bull

October 3, 1886 — January 14, 1978

Helen Dudley Bull is remembered in both the local and the academic community as a gifted pediatrician, teacher, writer, counselor, and friend. Her gentle serenity, quiet sense of humor, readiness to be helpful, and insight into both adult and childhood needs endeared her to many. She was a member of the Department of Family Life in the New York State College of Home Economics from July 1, 1926, until June 30, 1949, except for a brief period after the birth of her sixth child in 1928.

Dr. Helen, as her friends called her, was a member of a gifted family of five girls and two boys. An older sister studied bookbinding in the United States and France. Examples of her work are on exhibit in the J. Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City. Another sister became a deaconess in the Episcopal church, working in the Virginia mountains. One of her brothers became an architect, settling in Argentina.

Dr. Helen herself was sure by the time she graduated from Packer Collegiate Institute that she wanted to study medicine. From 1907 to 1911 she attended Cornell University Medical College, being elected to the top honorary society, Alpha Omega Alpha, in her junior year and graduating first in her class. She interned at Worcester Memorial Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts.

In 1914 she was married to Harry Clifford Bull, M.D., also a graduate of Cornell University Medical School. They established themselves in Ithaca as general practitioners with special interest in pediatrics. Many will remember Dr. Harry not only as a fine doctor but also as a gifted musician and composer.

During World War I he served with the Red Cross in Europe while Dr. Helen carried on their combined practice in Ithaca and cared for the first two of their six children.

Dr. Helen Bull was appointed acting professor of child hygiene in the College of Home Economics on July 1, 1926, to take over the work of Dr. Helen Zillmer, who had been on loan to the college for a year from the New York State Department of Health. She was elected professor of child hygiene September 24, 1931. She became pediatrician for the nursery school and for the babies who lived in the Home Management Apartments.

In 1938 Professor Lemo Rockwood initiated a course in marriage that was attended by men and women from a number of colleges on the campus. Dr. Bull taught the section of the course dealing with sex, reproduction, and childbirth. Mrs. Rockwood said of her participation in the course, "Her approach was that of the clinical teacher,

but her language was non- technical. She was relaxed and comfortable with her subject matter. The students respected her as a medical authority and appreciated her success as a wife and mother.”

Dr. Russell Smart, a colleague in the Department of Child Development and Family Relationships, wrote of her, “She saw health as a positive aspect of living, but she also recognized that families had to cope with more than medical and physical components. She also served as consultant with the students in the college, and acted as liaison with University Health Services.”

Dr. Mollie Smart, also a member of the department, wrote, “I have fond memories of Dr. Helen. First, she was a dear friend. Our whole family loved to go to the Bulls’ house and to their cottage on the lake. When the children went with us, Dr. Helen always did something to make it special. She would give each a tiny toy, or show them the new kittens, or tell them a story.

“As pediatrician in the nursery school Dr. Helen counseled us on our children’s health, both physical and mental. Not only did she have helpful ideas about how to cope with problems of growing up, but she made me feel confident and comfortable about myself as a parent.

“Dr. Helen and I were coauthors of *Living with Baby*, a Cornell Homemakers’ Bulletin, in 1947. We had many interesting and happy times talking about what was to go into the bulletin, she teaching me.

“Rus and I went to see Dr. Helen a few years ago in Keeseville, where she lived after her retirement from Cornell. She was about to give up her house and live in retirement apartments in Saratoga. We were amazed and pleased at how little she had changed in more than twenty years. She was just as full of life and love as she had been during those happy years in Ithaca.”

A Cornell extension bulletin that also came from Dr. Helen’s pen, *The Adolescent: Physical Development*, was reprinted in 1950. She conducted a number of research studies, among them “The Incidence and Treatment of Pin Worms in Nursery School Children.” With Professor Ethel Waring and George H. Mauhan, she conducted research on the “Effect of Ultra-violet Irradiation on a Group of Preschool Children,” published in June 1937.

Dr. Helen was a member of the American Medical Association and of the Tompkins County Medical Association. She served for many years on the Ithaca School Board.

She and her husband retired in 1950 to live in Keeseville, New York, Dr. Harry’s birthplace. Here she was active in the American Association of University Women and the North Country Women’s Club. Best of all, there was time

to share with her husband their many interests and friendships and to enjoy visits to and from many of their fifteen grandchildren. After his death on June 9, 1958, she lived for several years in Saratoga Springs at the retirement center. Her last year was spent at the Pine Rest Nursing Home in Paramus, New Jersey, near two of her daughters.

All of her six children attended Cornell. One, Dr. Christopher Bull, is currently professor of clinical medicine at Cornell and a psychiatrist at the Gannett Medical Clinic. Another son, Gifford, formerly flight engineer and test pilot for Calspan, is professor of aerospace and aerophysics at Mississippi State University. A daughter, Alice, follows her father's love of music. Living in Anchorage, Alaska, she teaches music and composes children's ballets, songs, and chamber music.

Dr. Helen died at the age of ninety-one in her sleep. Her daughter Helen wrote, "Up to her death she was clear of mind and in good spirits." It was a fitting close to her serene life.

Mary Ford, Lemo D. Rockwood, Esther H. Stocks