



Dr. Vernon E. Wilson

new dean of medical school

Missouri's new Dean of the School of Medicine, who passed his forty-fifth birthday last month, is a wiry man of above average height whose close-cropped hair is as white as the jacket he wears on the job.

Dr. Vernon E. Wilson, after a few months in the dean's office, is as much at ease there as at the controls of his small plane which he pilots about the country. Personable and approachable, the articulate new dean has taken hold of heavy administrative duties with quiet effectiveness, an ability that probably stems in part from his pre-medical experience in personnel work.

Figures on the number of medical deans who pilot their own planes are unavailable, but the circle is surely a small one, and Dean Wilson may be unique in this respect. He credits the plane with enabling him to handle dual responsibilities on two campuses for nearly five months after the University picked him for the position here. At the time, he was acting dean of the University of Kansas School of Medicine, and from mid-July to December he was an aerial commuter to Columbia each week-end. Shifting from one dean's office to the other was a matter of seventy minutes in his single-engine craft. He is not limited to short hops, however, and will fly across the country on professional business, or on vacation trips with Mrs. Wilson, their son Bill (nearly 12) and daughter Carla Jean (nearly 10).

In his first few months here the dean has gained myriad impressions of the Medical Center and the University community. These came in such profusion that at first he "was not inclined to act," but now the impressions are beginning to crystallize and, he says lightly, giving him "the courage to make mistakes, one way or another."

One thing he has become convinced of is the similarity of problems in medical schools. "There is so little difference," says the man who for seven years was assistant dean, associate dean and acting dean at Kansas, and whose knowledge of medical schools is extensive. As assistant secretary of the Association of American Medical Colleges he visits, with a team, from three to five medical schools throughout the country each year for accreditation purposes.

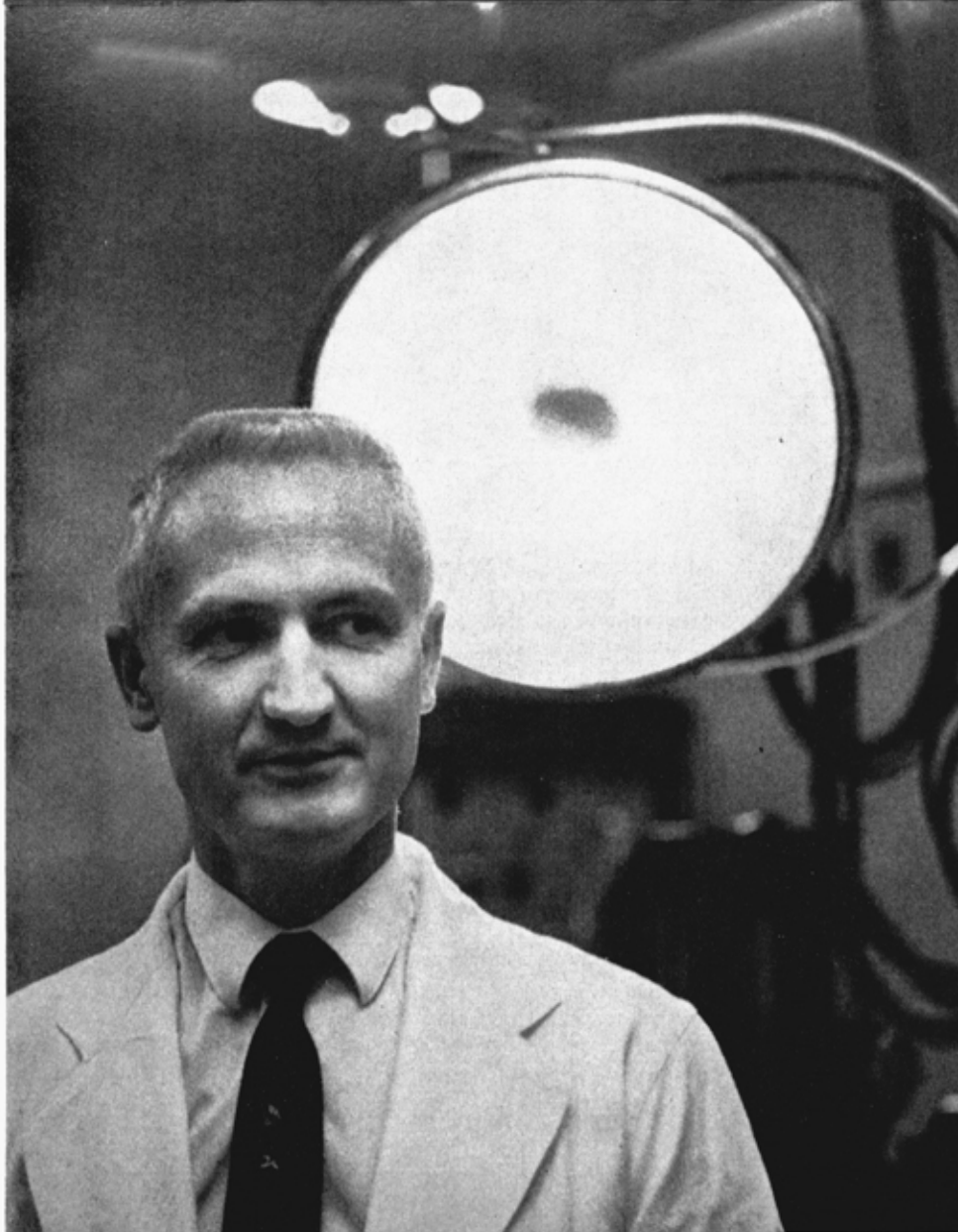
Dean Wilson is impressed by "the tremendous ad-

vantages of this School" by virtue of its location. He recalled a recent article in the A.M.A. Journal which said some old established universities having medical schools on separate campuses actually contemplate moving the clinical faculties back to the campus of the parent school. He added:

"I am impressed with the tremendous potential of the University's School of Medicine with its great advantages. It's new, and has a chance to shape its own direction without being hampered by the accretion of previous programs. It is close to the parent University, in an extremely friendly atmosphere. The faculty has leaned over backward for us. And there is a proper balance of patients, students and staff, which can be controlled."

The dean said an eventual total of 60,000 outpatient visits and 10,000 inpatient admissions a year would be about right for the 100 students who will be admitted annually later on, when the Teaching Hospital's entire 441-bed capacity will be used. As it is





now, all floors are open except the sixth floor, which may be in use early next year.

Good promising staff members will come to Missouri, he said, because they are guaranteed service responsibility while being able to maintain academic and research opportunity.

While Dr. Wilson admits to a yen to try some of the innovations he has seen in new hospitals at the universities of Florida and Mississippi, he calls the M. U. Medical Center "a traditional plant, excellent, and modern in the best sense. I think the people who designed it were interested in taking the very best features from hospitals around the country. Nothing daring, relatively conservative, but very wise."

He says the role of the School is unique in that it is situated between the large urban areas already served by medical schools. "We are and must con-

tinue to be an agency of rural Missouri," he said. "We have a responsibility to produce individuals who understand and are interested in family practice. But it is just as important that we go as consultants into the rural areas and help create the proper environment to attract and hold our graduates. This is a task for the Medical Center staff, the practicing profession, and the health agencies, as well as local citizens."

One of Dean Wilson's firmest convictions is that a physical plant can have no more value than that which is contributed by the people in it, which he concedes is a point often made in educational circles. "Much as I admire our plant," he said, "the final assessment of success of an educational program has to devolve around the caliber of people who enter into it, both

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faculty and students. If you have good people, you'll be successful; if you haven't, nothing will save your program."

As a high school graduate in his native Iowa, Dr. Wilson planned to study for a medical career, but a series of developments imposed a fourteen-year delay. The Illinois college he entered closed its doors while he was in his freshman year. Family responsibilities and the depression prevented his schooling elsewhere, then he served three years with the Navy during the war. He finally got back to books and laboratory, attending the University of Illinois College of Medicine and its College of Pharmacy, where he earned B.S., M.S. (in Pharmacology) and M.D. degrees.

His administrative duties at the University of Kansas included service on numerous committees as well as personal supervision of the rural preceptorship program. He was associate editor of the *State Medical Journal* and held other positions in state medical groups. He is a member of the planning committee for the Teaching Institute of the Association of American Medical Colleges, and the first member of the

American Academy of General Practice to be named a medical school dean.

When Dean Wilson's appointment to Missouri was announced, President Elmer Ellis said: "I am confident that Dr. Wilson will enlarge the services of our Medical Center to make it of still greater value and assistance to the people of Missouri." In the short time that he has been dean, Dr. Wilson has indeed given the Medical Center a big lift. Between 70 and 80 additional hospital beds have been opened. The flow of highly promising men to the staff has been stepped up sharply and is continuing. Research grants have more than doubled, and are now at the half million dollar mark. New or expanded services on several fronts are being developed, including an open ward unit in psychiatry some time next summer.

In a matter of a few months Missouri's flying dean is justifying the enthusiasm of former associates and proving their merit as sound prophets. In a demanding and highly important position, he gives every evidence of establishing himself firmly as the man for the job.

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often the sole or major provider at the same time that she is mother and homemaker. Even though the wife rationally realizes that her husband's education will eventually benefit the family, emotionally she often resents the fact that her husband is not fulfilling his "real" role. In this respect the educational demands of our society have changed faster than have our values and attitudes. It may take some time to adjust to this new type family.

Most wives, upon reflection, would nevertheless agree that their major problems are not material ones, but problems of a social-psychological nature. These social-psychological problems may be summed up by saying that the wife often loses a sense of value, of worth. What causes this depreciation of the self?

First, the wife of a student can become very lonely. The husband, of necessity, is away from home studying and/or working a good deal of the time. The conception of modern marriage assumes that the husband and wife will be companions, but this aspect of marriage must often be reduced for the student couple. While children and friends may help fill the void left by the absent husband, the woman's conception of herself as a woman depends on frequent validation by her husband. The too-busy student husband may not be able to give the wife the attention she needs to give her a continued sense of value.

A further difficulty arises for women who have completed only a high school education, or who have had only a brief college career. Marriage often frees the man from the social and sexual problems

he had prior to marriage. After marriage his interests may expand enormously—to his occupation, politics, literature, etc. This happens at the same time that the young wife, especially with children, finds her contacts narrower than ever before in her life. The result may be an increasing feeling of distance between husband and wife, an increasing lack of common interests, particularly when the woman has not completed her education to her satisfaction. She may develop feelings of intellectual inferiority to her husband. Numerous women who did not complete their education because of marriage express their regret. In some cases this regret may lead to resentment of their husbands.

Obviously, many college marriages work out well. For the emotionally mature couple, college may even facilitate adjustment, especially if the time necessary to complete the husband's education is not excessive. Many couples, though, are not mature enough to overcome the problems of college marriage without creating tensions that impair the relationship between husband and wife. Young couples considering college marriage should consider carefully whether or not they are capable of living together harmoniously under conditions of considerable stress.

Editor's note: The *Alumnus* will be surprised (and disappointed) if this issue's articles on college marriages fail to produce reaction upholding this new cultural pattern on the campus. Such comment is welcome, especially any discussions of Dr. Margaret Mead's article starting on page 8. The magazine looks forward to presenting a round-up of views on college marriages in an early issue, probably in May.