

Chicago - May 1976 ASGE Meeting

MEMORIES OF DR. RUDOLF SCHINDLER BY DR. LEONIDAS H. BERRY,
ONE OF HIS EARLY AMERICAN STUDENTS

INTERVIEWER: DR. GORDON, CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE
ON HISTORY OF ENDOSCOPY FOR THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR
GASTROINTESTINAL ENDOSCOPY

DR. GORDON: Dr. Berry, how and when did you meet Dr. Schindler?

DR. BERRY: I was introduced to Dr. Rudolf Schindler by Dr. Sidney Portis, the sponsor of my Rosenwall University of Chicago training fellowship in Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology at Cook County Hospital. I met Dr. Schindler in 1935, very shortly after his arrival from Munich to the faculty of the University of Chicago.

DR. GORDON: Dr. Berry, how did you become involved with Dr. Schindler?

DR. BERRY: Becoming a student of Dr. Schindler was a "kiss of fate", an especially good fortune for me as a member of an American minority group, so early after Dr. Schindler's invention of the gastroscope in Germany. The instrument had already begun to excite wide interest during the three years since the 1932 appearance of the gastroscope on the market. It was during my second year as the gastroenterologist at the predominantly Black Provident Hospital, which had an affiliation with the University of Chicago, that the Schindler-Barry association began. Because of the affiliation between Provident and Billings Hospitals and because of my immediate fascination with the idea of viewing the living stomach through this new instrument, I appealed to the administrations of both hospitals for the opportunity of being a special student at Billings with Dr. Schindler. It was an important step forward in my career as a young gastroenterologist when I was granted the opportunity of looking over Dr. Schindler's shoulder as he pointed out endoscopic pathology on the stomach. This I did once or twice a week for one year at Billings Hospital as a special student for subsequent service at Provident Hospital. I was excitedly and profoundly impressed with Dr. Schindler's technical skill, his keen knowledge of gastropathology, physiology, and endoscopic anatomy. Also impressive was his well-organized system of patient followup and recordkeeping. Beyond all else, his expertise as a teacher and his compassion for patients intrigued and inspired me far beyond my anticipations.

DR. GORDON: Dr. Berry, what was your next step? And, tell me some special memories of this great man, the Father of Gastroscopy.

DR. BERRY: At the end of one year at Billings Hospital, I had never actually ~~been~~ introduced ~~to~~ the gastroscope, as was the case with the other mostly short-term students. I had, of course, viewed the gastric pathology in a few hundred patients, observed the working of the Dr. and Mrs. Schindler team technique, and hung on every word of the rather formal Schindler explanations of the protocol and summary of diagnostic impressions.

One day, after the clinic session, I said, "Dr. Schindler, our Provident Hospital across the park has just two hundred beds, but we have a good housestaff and the fourth largest out-patient clinic, mostly indigent, in the City of Chicago. There are many X-ray negative dyspeptics in my clinic. Would you be willing to visit Provident and gastroscope some interesting cases?"

The response (in dialect): "Dr. Berry, your hospital is not very far. I am sure that I could arrange with Dr. Walter Palmer, yah? I would be very glad to visit and assist you if you have some interesting cases - so ~~ay~~ not?"

"Thank you, Dr. Schindler. Then, I will arrange some cases at your convenience, but, of course, I have no gastroscope."

"Oh, vell, dis is no problem. I vill bring along my gastroscope which, is it not so, probably the only one in town - I believe?", he said with a chuckle. "So, you are not alone, yah?"

"Now, Dr. Berry, vat about transportation? You see, I have no car and Mrs. Schindler must come with me to hold ze head and, of course, to bring my coffee, which, as you have observed I must have each day at midmorning."

"Of course, I understand, Dr. Schindler. I will gladly pick you up at your Hyde Park home in my car and take you and Mrs. Schindler to Provident Hospital."

After the first clinic day with Dr. Schindler and five patients examined, Mrs. Schindler was already showing my nurse the technique of head-holding and the tender loving care of patients during the examination for which Mrs. Schindler was so famous.

Dr. and Mrs. Schindler were brought once each week to Provident Hospital with the gastroscope and home-brewed coffee for several months until I had examined more than a hundred ^{patients} under his tutelage, while he literally looked over my shoulder.

DR. BERRY:

One day, as Dr. Schindler finished an examination, he said, "Now, I would like to dictate ze protocol. Are you ready to write, yah? Please vot is the date? (He was told the date.) "Ah! Mozart's birthday. Zis tells me I must get back to my piano forte more often. I am now already getting vot you call, um, rusty, for not enough practice." Smilingly, he continued, "My vife does not remind me often enough of my music."

"But, my dear," said Mrs. Schindler, "you cannot do everything. Your work is already too big."

"Yah! But, Ven I vas in Munich and director of ze physicians symphony orchestra, I was also quite busy with my practice, development of my gastroscope, my lurbuch, and could find time for music."

"Yes," said Mrs. Schindler, "but you found not enough time for pleasure with your children and your wife".

At this point, Dr. Schindler chuckled with empathetic agreement and proceeded to dictate the protocol.

On another occasion, as Dr. Schindler peeked through the scope with continuous enthusiastic instructional chatter, "Look! he exclaimed. Vill you see dot? There is a tiny defect on the posterior wall of ze upper antrum, near the lesser curvature. It is a typical superficial gray-to-white erosion. It's borders are vell-defined and this kind of lesion may eventually become chronic peptic ulcer. I saw these often in Munich in the old days after ze war, after ze world war, when there was very much malnutrition in Germany. Most tiny erosions will heal and recur or bleed."

The examination completed and protocol dictated, I asked, "Dr. Schindler, were you in the German army during the war?"

"Oh, yes, and a few times even in the trenches, but mostly I was pathologist in the battle-zone hospitals. It was a great army, but some important mistakes were made in the high command." (This conversation occurred in 1937.)

"What do you think, Dr. Schindler, about the new rumblings which might lead to Germany being involved in another world war under Hitler?"

"Oh, no, Dr. Berry, there will be no repeat of ze world war. No country can defeat the new German army."

DR. BERRY:

As we worked at Provident, Dr. Schindler remembered an American doctor who had purchased one of the early Wolf-Schindler scopes on a trip to Germany, who, after a little use, wanted to sell. So, my first instrument, with a serial number well within the first one hundred manufactured, was purchased used for \$500. With this, I launched into the development of my independent gastroscopy clinic at Provident Hospital in 1937.

Dr. Schindler and I remained friends from the first year of his landing in America until the passing of his first most loyal and lovable wife and his return subsequently to his native Munich.

His ability as teacher, his student-oriented concern, his dedicated zeal for the pursuit of his craft, his compassion for his patients while being examined -- all have led me to regard him as one of the most important of the few really great sources of personal inspiration for my entire medical career.