
Pass him in the hall, meet him in the lobby or in the bank, and because of his unassuming manner you would never guess that he is such a remarkable person.

Have you met Dr. Todd?

by Earl W. Moore

WHEN I WAS hospitalized at Riverside Hospital, Nashville, Tennessee, following an attack of hypertension, my doctor came into my room and soberly announced that the routine X rays showed a spot on my lung that concerned him. He ordered more extensive X rays the next day and consulted with the radiologist before coming to see me again that noon.

This time he had a more sober look than I had ever noticed since being a personal friend of his. "I've looked at your latest X rays, and I have decided to call in Dr. Todd," he informed me. "You know Dr. Todd, don't you?"

"No, I don't," I answered.

My thoughts were not on Dr. Todd, who he was, or whether I had met him before but why the extra X rays, and why he was calling in all these specialists.

That evening about 9:30 my wife and I were anxiously awaiting this Dr. Todd and whatever he had to say. Soon there was a gentle knock. With the invitation to come in, a dark-brown Black man of medium height entered. He was unimpressive professionally, both in looks and manner. He greeted us with a sincere smile and a warm personality that made us feel as if we had known him for years. He began to explain to my wife and me what my

potential problem might be, drawing diagrams of the lungs so that I might fully understand. If the diagnosis was positive, then surgery would necessarily follow, and Dr. Todd explained some details of procedures. His manner was so concerned but reassuring that the thought of the worst alternative was not alarming to me.

While he talked I looked at him, and my mental computer flashed back into the files of years gone by. Dr. Todd, Dr. Todd . . . oh, yes, 1968, the Poor People's March to Washington—the branch of the march that originated in Marks, Mississippi, stopped in Memphis, Tennessee, and in Nashville. . . . Awaiting the weary marchers in Nashville was a coalition of community leaders and the medical coordinator from Meharry Medical College—a Dr. David B. Todd. . . . I remember him! Why, when that caravan of eleven Greyhound buses arrived at the Fairgrounds, there was Dr. Todd with a comprehensive clinic, including a Seventh-day Adventist medical van that would accompany the caravan on to Washington, all set up to take care of the medical needs of the travelers.

"So this is Dr. Todd," I thought to myself, as I came back to the present situation of my own illness.

"We'll take some more tests before we determine if that upper left lobe of your lung needs to be removed," Dr. Todd told me, "but don't worry; everything will be all right."

My wife and I gained confidence in him at that first meeting. After X-ray

and radioisotope scannings and a bronchogram, my case was diagnosed by all the consulting physicians as a tumor of the lung that might be cancerous. Dr. Todd came in again and explained to my wife and me that it was imperative they operate and remove the upper left lobe where this spot was visible. I was moved to the George W. Hubbard Hospital of Meharry, where Dr. Todd, his fine team of surgeons, and the excellent postoperative care unit would all play a great part in a fight against this menace that threatened my life.

Before my surgery I had friends to visit me. "Who is going to do the surgery?" they asked.

"Dr. Todd," I answered. "Have you met him?"

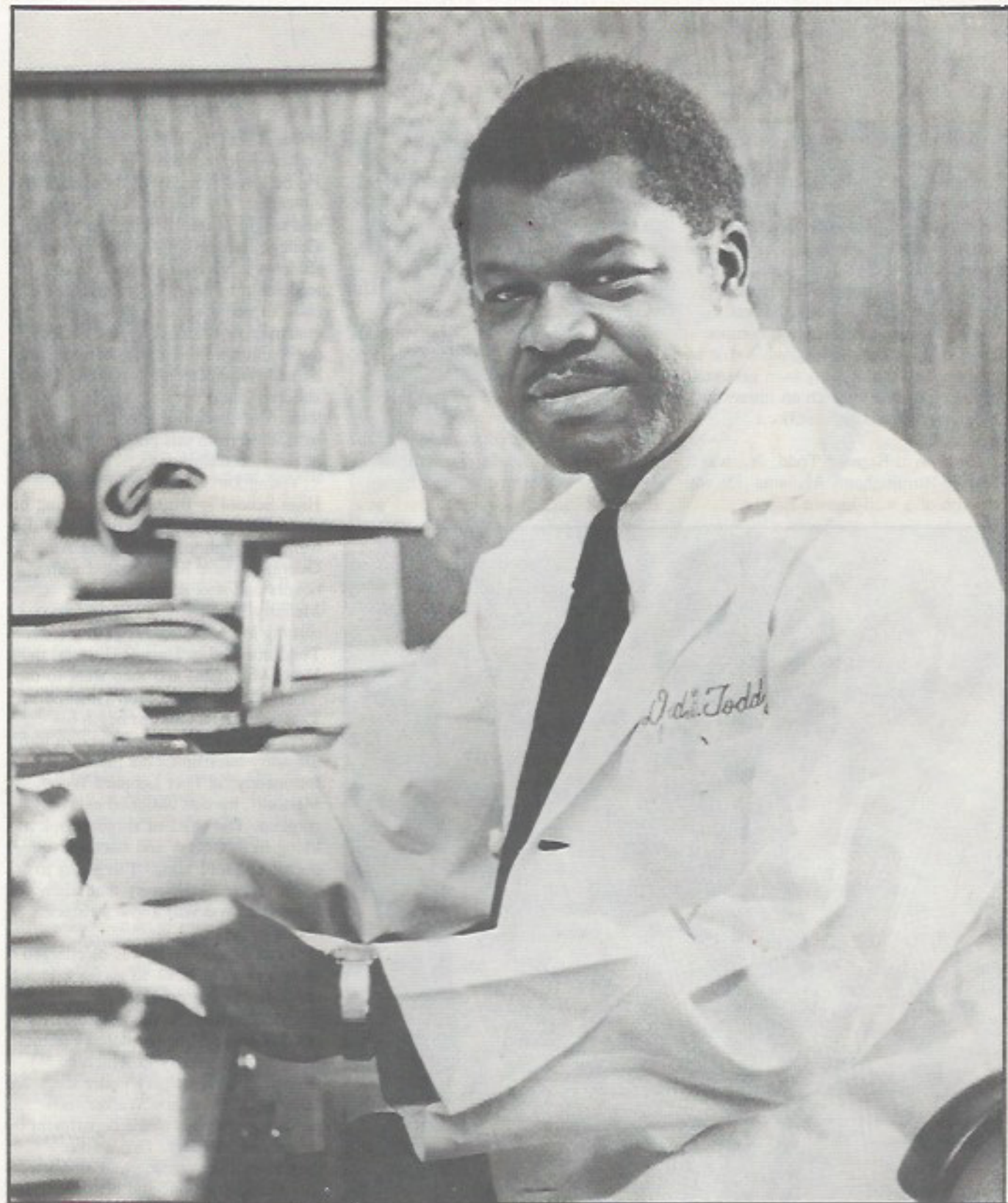
"No, I don't believe I have," was the usual answer.

"Oh, you probably have. You just didn't recognize him as Dr. Todd," I would reply.

On one or two occasions Dr. Todd walked in while we were discussing him, and I would introduce him to my group of visitors. I could see the look of "Is that Dr. Todd?" on their faces. When he had gone, they said that they had seen him many times but did not know who he was. That's the way he is. Pass him in the hall; meet him in the lobby or in the bank; see him walking on the streets, and because of his totally unassuming manner, you would never guess that he is such a remarkable person.

Immediately after my surgery I was put in the intensive-care unit. My wife

Earl W. Moore is head of the Inner Cities, Lay Activities, and Sabbath School departments, South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Nashville, Tennessee.



and a minister friend of mine, who had come all the way from Dallas, Texas, to be with me, were at my bedside when Dr. Todd came in to make another check. Lifting the covers, looking at the drainage tubes, and checking me over, he smiled and left. My friend, disturbed at this intruder's poking around, asked my wife in an

irritated manner, "Who was he?"

"Oh, that was Dr. Todd," she told him.

"Him?" replied my astonished friend. "I thought he was just an intern or orderly!"

Somehow many people seem to believe that greatness must show itself in some proud form—indifference,

unconcern, or even arrogance. It is felt by many that men of importance and stature are unapproachable because of the level of their political, scientific, or educational affiliates. Great men are measured by their ability to be of service to mankind without condescension, but with a sincere love for their fellowman.

Dr. William Coopwood, chairman of the department of psychiatry at Meharry, and Dr. Gardner L. Dixon, a personal friend, stopped by my room to visit during my second week of convalescence. I mentioned to him how busy I thought Dr. Todd was, since I would see him at all hours of the day. Dr. Coopwood asked me if I really knew just how qualified and competent Dr. Todd is. Then it was, with what he told me and through my own personal prying, I came up with an interesting biography of this little-noticed personality.

Dr. David Bernard Todd, Jr., was born in Birmingham, Alabama. He was the son of a well-known Baptist

minister, for whom he was named. He had one brother and a younger sister. Dr. Todd attributes his success to the discipline of a loving, yet strict father. In his youth he asked his father for something that he should have earned for himself.

"This is not Gimme, Alabama, This is Birmingham, Alabama, and whatever you get in this life, you will learn to earn it," replied his father.

The senior Todd instilled in his children the virtues of prayer, faith, service, and earnest effort, and he was an example of that combination of faith plus works. The children saw their father, the pastor of the large Bethel Baptist Church, not only at work as a

spiritual leader but also as a man dedicated to the future of his people. He believed strongly in the merits of education, whether secular or spiritual, and taught at the Birmingham Baptist College, where he prepared ministerial students to give strong and capable leadership to their people. He had a habit of being up and about some constructive business at five o'clock every morning regardless of what time he had retired the night before. The children could not help but learn lessons of discipline, dedication, and hard work from this pragmatic example of paternal training.

Young David attended Rosedale High School in Birmingham during his pre-college years. From there David went to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, where he graduated with honors and was accepted at the Meharry Medical College. After earning his MD degree, young Dr. Todd interned at Hurley Hospital in Flint, Michigan, and then went to the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Tuskegee, Alabama, to begin his surgical residency. His induction into the army interrupted his plans, but fortunately, at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, he was assigned as a surgeon. The chief of surgery took a liking to this eager and talented young doctor and told him, "I'm going to teach you in such a way that when you leave here you will know as much about surgery as I do."

When Major Todd was discharged, he had two choices—to go back into a surgical training program or into private practice. At the advice of the chief of surgery, he reentered a training program at Meharry in which he studied general surgery under the famous Dr. Matthew Walker, now professor emeritus of the department of surgery at Meharry. Dr. Walker appreciated the attitude and ability of this young surgeon, and near the completion of his residency, he told him, "Meharry needs a doctor to teach cardiac and thoracic surgery, and you're the man I want!"

Dr. Walker worked hard to get an opening for his young surgeon at the University of Minnesota Graduate School of Cardiac and Thoracic Surgery, one of the best schools of its kind in the world. The problem was



getting a Black student into the school, which in preintegration days was no easy thing, even in Minnesota. But Dr. Walker ignored the obstacles. He called Dr. Wagenstein, chairman of the department, and pleaded for an opening for his student. Other graduate schools had accepted Dr. Todd for a July entrance, but Dr. Walker held out for the much-wanted reply from Dr. Wagenstein. The call came, and in October a happy but apprehensive Dr. Todd left for Minnesota. There he met a Black friend who helped to make his ethnic burden lighter, and they became good friends of two white South African students, one of whom was the famous Christian Barnard, noted for making the first human heart transplant.

It was here that Dr. Todd earned the diplomates of both the American Board of Surgeons and the American Board of Thoracic Surgery as well as a PhD in thoracic surgery, finishing his work at the university in four years. He is a member of the honor society of Meharry's Beta Kappa Chi and Kappa Pi and has been inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha fraternity because he is a faculty member from the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Coopwood, commenting on Dr. Todd's achievements, said that usually the oral examinations take from two to four hours for the PhD, but Dr. Todd's professors conceded his knowledge of his dissertation in twenty minutes—the shortest orals in the history of the school! Dr. Todd is now an associate professor of surgery and head of the division of thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at Meharry.

As commendable as his professional and scientific skills are, this is not what endears people to Dr. Todd. He leaves his home at 6:30 AM, goes to one or several of the hospitals at which he is a staff member, generally has surgery scheduled for 8 AM, and when that is completed, he visits his ward patients or goes to instruct a class of undergraduate students. Then he goes over patient treatment and diagnosis with his resident students in the early afternoon, and for four days a week, from 4 to 6:30, he sees patients at his office. From there he goes again to visit his patients in the hospital.

"How do you make time for your



family?" I asked. "Don't you at least have dinner with them?"

"No," he replied. "If I am lucky, I see them when I come home at night—if they aren't asleep."

His family does not feel neglected. Because they share in his dedication, they understand and appreciate his love of service to humanity. A devoutly Christian family, they are unselfish in their demands on him.

Lorraine Todd, a remarkable person in her own right, describes her husband as a modest, dedicated man and an excellent father and husband. They are the parents of four children: Vickie Lynn, 16; David Bernard III, 15; Cynthia, 14; and little Cathy, 10. Mrs. Todd is quick to point out that he reserves the weekends for the family. He takes them out to dinner, goes

boating up the Cumberland River, and attends worship with them. Each year Dr. Todd plans a vacation for his family to some place of interest.

A nurse told me that the only time she ever saw Dr. Todd agitated or upset was when one of his patients was neglected. Otherwise, you could never meet a more pleasant, unassuming, and personable individual.

My surgery was a success, and the tumors were nonmalignant. I am grateful to God for His miracle and thankful for a fine, competent, and concerned surgeon. Dr. David Todd, Jr., is a man of achievement and of genuine humility, void of selfish pursuits. I am glad I met him. I hope you will, one day, meet Dr. Todd too. He is a surgeon with the heart of the Good Samaritan. □