

Rubin Hyman Flocks was born in New York City, the son of recent immigrants, Morris and Rose Flocks. Born prematurely and weighing just three pounds at birth, Rubin Flocks nonetheless prospered as a child and, so it was said, delighted his mother with his accomplishments, first in the New York public schools and later (1920) in Baltimore, Maryland. An enthusiastic student, Flocks received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1926 from Johns Hopkins University, where he was a Phi Beta Kappa scholar. In 1930, he earned his M.D., also from Johns Hopkins, and was chosen for membership in Alpha Omega Alpha.

Rubin Flocks began his residency training at Johns Hopkins in orthopædics but soon switched to urology, training for a time under Hugh Hampton Young, professor and chief of urology (1914-41) and founder of the *Journal of Urology* (1917). With little chance of advancing to chief resident at Hopkins, Flocks completed his residency training in surgery and urology at the University of Iowa under the first head of urology, Nathaniel G. Alcock (1925-49). Alcock ran his department with military efficiency; nonetheless, Rubin Flocks, a perfectionist himself, found a home there and received his first academic appointment as chief resident and instructor in 1934. In relatively quick succession, he rose to the rank of associate in 1935, to assistant professor in 1937, to associate professor in 1939, and to professor in 1947. In 1949, when Alcock resigned in protest over the Medical Service Plan, which threatened his large private practice income, Flocks became department chair, a position that he held until 1974.

At this far remove, many will have forgotten that Rubin Flocks came of age at a time when anti-Semitism, in varying forms and degrees, was a pervasive feature of American society. Prior to World War II, American medical schools routinely imposed informal quotas on admissions of Jewish students, as well as other minorities and women. Likewise, Jewish medical graduates—again, with other minorities and women—encountered similar restrictions in securing internships, residencies, academic appointments, and hospital staff privileges. Thus, when Rubin Flocks applied for a residency position at the University of Iowa in 1931, one correspondent matter-of-factly assured Department of Surgery Chair Howard L. Beye that Flocks was "very agreeable" and was "one of the better type" of his "race." In such an environment, Flocks' appointments—first as resident, later as faculty member, and later still as department chair—were, in themselves, noteworthy achievements. Indeed, as one of the first Jewish faculty members in the College of Medicine, Rubin Flocks was a pioneer of sorts.

His devotion to work and his rigorous work habits made Rubin Flocks legendary, as did his efforts to instill those traits in his residents. Arriving at University Hospital each workday at 7:00 A.M., Flocks was greeted by his residents and presented with a typewritten morning report. Changing to his surgical "scrubs," he then embarked on the day's first surgical procedure. Meanwhile, the urology clinic opened at 8:00 A.M., and Dr. Flocks alternated between surgery and clinic visits until mid-afternoon. From 3:00 to 5:00 P.M., residents presented x-rays and other patient findings to "the old man" and sought his evaluations. From 5:00 to 6:00 P.M., Flocks and his residents performed evening rounds, always with Dr. Flocks providing carefully chosen words of encouragement to his patients and, perhaps less often, to his residents as well. After a quick dinner, Flocks returned to his office to attend to correspondence and other matters until 10:00 P.M., followed on occasion by further patient rounds. Rubin Flocks demanded the best service for his patients, and, as might be expected, the Department of Urology enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for prompt patient service under his guidance.

Never married, Flocks seemed to relish playing the role of "father abbot" to his resident "monks." Certainly, he led a very simple life in material terms. One longtime acquaintance claimed, for

example, that Flocks continued to live in the residents' quarters of the University Hospital until 1950. Another story had it that he drove an automobile given him by one of his patients "until it expired of natural causes." Certainly, too, Dr. Flocks was a stern taskmaster and had high expectations of others, as he did of himself. Be that as it may, there was more than a little "pseudofercocity," as one admirer put it, in his manner. Behind that tough exterior lay a caring and surprisingly gentle man genuinely concerned for the welfare of his patients and for the professional development of his students. A light-hearted tribute from one of those students perhaps best captured the true nature of Rubin Flocks as teacher and mentor: "I salute the man without whom my four years in Iowa City would have been much more pleasant and without whom I would not have had the finest urological training possible."

During his years as a junior faculty member, Rubin Flocks' research mostly coincided with the interests of his chief, addressing such subjects as urolithiasis, the blood supply of the enlarged prostate, and transurethral prostatectomy. Soon after his elevation to department chair in 1949, however, Flocks' research displayed a pronounced shift, focusing especially on the study of carcinomas of the bladder and prostate. Beginning in the early 1950s, at the dawn of the age of nuclear medicine, Flocks published extensively on brachytherapy, using radioactive colloidal gold (Au 198), alone and in combination with other therapies, for the treatment of carcinoma of the prostate. In all, he maintained longitudinal records on 1,500 brachytherapy patients and shared his results in a series of nearly two dozen publications. In 1960, Flocks and his colleague, David A. Culp, published a textbook, *Radiation Therapy of Early Prostatic Cancer*.

Rubin Flocks also contributed to his profession at many other levels. Locally, he was a member of the Johnson County Medical Society and served as president in 1944. At the state level, Flocks was a member of the Iowa Medical Society and served as vice president (1971-72) and president (1973-74). Nationally, he was secretary and then chair of the Section on Urology of the American Medical Association (1953-56), member of the board of governors of the American College of Surgeons (1959-62), member of the AMA's Residency Review Committee (1958-75), secretary (1962-67) and president (1968-69) of the American Urological Association, member of the National Research Council (1965-75), and secretary and president (1963-68) of the American Board of Urology. At the time of his death in 1975, Flocks was a member of more than 30 scientific and professional societies, including the Pan-American Medical Society, the Pan-Pacific Surgical Association, the Sociedad Mexicana de Urologie, and the Societé Internationale d'Urologie.

Dr. Flocks received numerous awards recognizing his professional contributions: the American Urological Association's Ramon Guiteras Award (1968), the Valentine Award from the New York Academy of Medicine (1972), the Edward L. Keyes Award from the American Association of Genito-Urinary Surgeons (1974), the American Cancer Society Award for Distinguished Service in Cancer Control (1974), and the University of Iowa Distinguished Service Award (1975). In 1994, the Department of Urology created an endowed chair in his name, honoring Dr. Flocks' exemplary service to the College of Medicine, to medical education, to medical science and the medical profession, and to patient care.