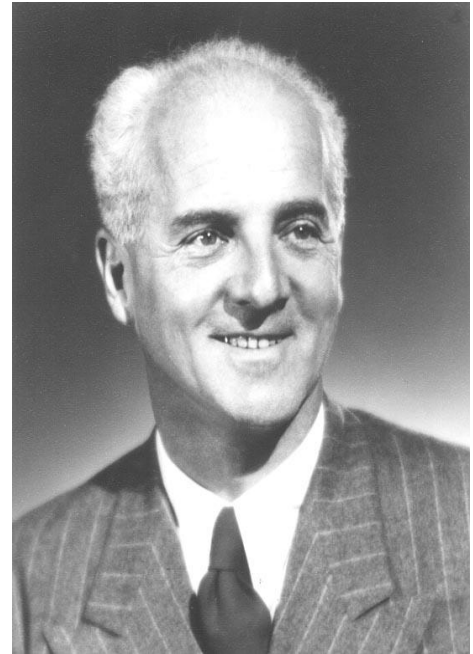


Dr. Stephan Epstein

Nominated by Shirley Mook

Dr. Stephan Epstein lived and worked in Marshfield for nearly 29 years. Arriving here in August 1936, he established Marshfield Clinic's Dermatology Department. Then during his tenure as a Marshfield Clinic physician his interest in teaching led to the start of Marshfield Clinic's first residency program, and his research interest led to the establishment of the Marshfield Clinic Foundation for Medical Research and Education.

Stephan Epstein was born in Nuremberg, Germany on March 14, 1900. His father was a doctor in the field of dermatology. Following in his father's footsteps, young Epstein studied medicine, and as was then customary, studied at universities in Munich, Breslau, Heidelberg, and Frankfort. Besides his medical studies, personal interests led him into the fields of music, art, philosophy and history too.



While a student at Munich, he had the opportunity to tutor Elsbeth Lauinger, another university student who struggled with a required anatomy class. Epstein knew after only a few sessions that this was the girl that he was going to marry, but the wedding was postponed four years.

Despite being ostracized by classmates for his Jewish faith, Epstein graduated from the University of Erlangen Medical School in 1925 and went on to serve a residency in a Munich hospital. Wanting to specialize in dermatology like his father, he became disillusioned with medicine when he could find no residency available with money to support him. So, without informing Elsbeth or his family he took a job as a bookkeeper in Frankfort. During the next year he saved enough money for he and Elsbeth to be married on May 27, 1926.

After lengthy discussions, the newlyweds decided Dr. Epstein should go back into medicine despite the likely hardships. Working with his father's friend, Professor Jadassohn at the University of Breslau, Dr Epstein secured a residency position but only at half pay. He studied, practiced clinical dermatology, and did research as he advanced to better positions offering better income. It was during this time that their two children, Wolfgang and Ernst, were born.

In 1933 Adolph Hitler was made Chancellor of Germany. Under his leadership, the oppression and persecution of Jews became increasingly more radical. This led Dr. Epstein to leave Nazi Germany, arriving in New York City December 7, 1935.

Safe in New York, he contacted Professor Jadassohn's friend Dr. Marion Sulzberger, who arranged for Epstein to work with Dr. Hopkins at Columbia Hospital instructing medical students.

Then learning that the Marshfield Clinic needed a dermatologist, he came here the following April to visit the local medical institution. Favorably impressed by the establishment, which then had about a dozen doctors, he completed the Wisconsin medical board examinations and, in August, joined the clinic and founded its dermatology department. His wife, Elsbeth, and their small sons, Ernst and Wolfgang, arrived here from Germany during September.

At that time, most hospital patients came from within a radius of about 35 miles and Dr. Epstein's specialty was not in high demand. As word of his ability and his research spread though, the number of patients and the distances from which they came increased to include all of Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan. Dr. Epstein had great empathy and willingly spent long hours helping patients and their families find hope.

Dr. Epstein's enthusiasm for life and teaching resulted in a closeness with his residents and medical students to the point where he would bring them to his home at night for teaching sessions. He started Marshfield Clinic's first residency program in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

In 1940 Dr. Epstein's colleagues provided \$400 to initiate his dermatology research. He championed the cause for a formal program which the Clinic Board of Directors established in December 1959 to promote research and education. In 1960, the first grant was received by the Marshfield Clinic Foundation for Medical Research and Education for the study of Farmer's Lung.

Epstein was the first president of the foundation. During his six years as president, he obtained substantial grants for research. He also reached out into the community and enlisted community support. With the involvement of business and community leaders, a successful fund drive raised an additional \$11,000 for the foundation.

When he reached age 65, Dr. Epstein retired from the Marshfield Clinic and he and Elsbeth moved to Madison. He established a private practice there and devoted time to the University of Wisconsin Medical School as a clinical professor of dermatology. He continued to be active until a few months before his death in 1973 at the age of 73.

A memorial tribute in the Marshfield News-Herald included these words, "Those who knew Dr. Epstein found him to be a man of many qualities, a world citizen as well as a lover of his adopted country, a warm human being possessed of humor and compassion as well as intellect and wisdom."

Dr. William Schorr, a fellow Marshfield Clinic dermatologist, remembered him with these words, "True leaders can be recognized not only by what they have accomplished in their lifetime but also by what they have inspired in others. The most valuable years of my own professional development were those I had following Dr. Epstein and eagerly learning as much as I could from this great man."