

experience. The incident has led to new insight into the strange mechanisms of human memory, of how the brain records every waking sight and sound and, literally, how we profit by past experience. This unique knowledge, developed patiently over the years by Dr. Penfield, has been called "a turning point in the study of mankind."

Some members of the class of 1913 at Princeton University are still surprised that "Pen" Penfield of Spokane, Wash., became a surgeon. At college he was mainly interested in playing football. (Not until his junior year did he decide to study medicine.) In the autumn following graduation he coached the freshman team. The following year he was head field coach of the varsity. He won a Rhodes scholarship, and left after the season was over to begin his medical studies at Oxford. He taught himself to be ambidextrous and started using a straight razor to help develop a steady hand for surgery.

At Oxford he met the man who influenced his life vastly: the famous Canadian, Sir William Osler, then Regius Professor of Medicine. In 1916 Penfield returned to the United States to complete his medical studies at Johns Hopkins. When he graduated he had a wife, a child and no money. But he still had one unused year of his three-year Rhodes scholarship. Borrowing money, he returned with his family to Oxford to study with Sir Charles Sherrington, the greatest living expert on the human nervous system. After that Penfield knew what his lifework was to be: neurosurgery.

In 1928 came another turning point in his life. He was offered the chair of neurosurgery at Montreal's McGill University because of his growing reputation as a surgeon and experimenter in the nerve cell laboratory he had founded at New York's Presbyterian Hospital. In Montreal, Penfield dreamed of a vast new institute devoted exclusively to the study and treatment of brain ailments. He is a persuasive dreamer. Contributions from the Rockefeller Foundation and wealthy Canadians enabled the vision to come to life. In 1934 the Montreal Neurological Institute, an eight-story limestone building on the slopes of Mount Royal, opened its doors.

Today half or more of the institute's patients are without funds and Dr. Penfield's only income



Dr. Penfield

is from a comparatively small group of private patients. But there are other rewards. Though he is a naturalized Canadian citizen, he has been at or near the top of popularity polls of "greatest living Canadians." He has also been awarded the Order of Merit. (Dwight D. Eisenhower and Winston Churchill are two of the 24 members of the order.)

These honors surprise no one, but they underline an almost incredible irony. This unorthodox, trail-blazing surgeon was once regarded with pity by his colleagues for his perseverance. The British neurosurgeon, Sir Geoffrey Jefferson, said of him: "Penfield devoted his life to epilepsy research at a time when the subject was regarded by the medical profession as fruitless and time-wasting. He persevered for 20 years in a medical desert, in the face of every kind of discouragement."