

# THE HOUSE THAT COWLEY BUILT

By GERRI KOBREN

ON THE WALL in the office of the director of nurses in the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (also known as MIEMSS, or Shock Trauma) is a small but conspicuous sign:

"Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,  
 JUN 27 1982

"For I am the meanest son-of-a-bitch in the valley."

It was, says Elizabeth Scanlon, a peace offering from the boss. Dr. R Adams Cowley, founder of Shock Trauma, director of MIEMSS, professor of thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, had been shouting at her. She walked out of the room. When she returned, he was gone, and the sign was up.

"The people he likes and respects the most he'll have these yelling, screaming matches with. People he doesn't really respect he rarely raises his voice at or reprimands," Ms. Scanlon explains.

The telephone interrupts the conversation. It is Dr. Cowley, calling from his office to hers with a message, not to Ms. Scanlon, but about her. His voice on the line is gentle, whispery. "That girl you're talking to," he says, "is really the one who made it all happen. I'm a dreamer; she's the one who took notes and put the dream into form."  
 SUN MAG.

He will, in another conversation, offer similar praise for his long-time executive assistant, Sandra Barnes: "I couldn't have made it go without these two girls," he says.

Liz Scanlon is not surprised. She was a new nurse in 1957, fresh out of the St. Agnes Hospital school, when she came to work for R Adams Cowley, who was then pioneering in open heart surgery at University Hospital. Looking for something to dedicate herself to, she did indeed sit up with him after long days in the operating room, and wrote the grant requests that led to the creation of Maryland's internationally famous trauma response system. "She works like hell,"

Dr. Cowley has said of her; it is his highest accolade.  
 SUN MAG.

"He can be very charming socially and in first impressions," Ms. Scanlon says now. "Obviously he knows how to manipulate people. He couldn't have accomplished what he has otherwise."  
 JUN 27 1982

Friends, the kind he likes well enough to shout with, generally call him "R" or "R-A." Liz Scanlon, who

still thinks of him as the "eminent cardiac surgeon" she came to work for 25 years ago, cannot bring herself to say anything but "Dr. Cowley."

Hospitalized this winter as a result of a fracture sustained when he slipped on the ice behind Shock Trauma in January, Dr. Cowley describes himself in other terms. Pajamaed in the crisp pink outfit the doctors and nurses in his unit wear into surgery, he scrawls blue ball-point-pen diagrams on his bedsheet to illustrate the cardiac-assist devices he created with his engineering pals in his heart-surgery days; then, airily, he dismisses whatever distress the inky mess may cause in the hospital laundry. "I am," he says with his blue-gray eyes a-twinkle, "a son-of-a-bitch. But I'm a lovable son-of-a-bitch."

R Adams Cowley is being charming.  
 JUN 27 1982

Softly, softly, with earnest good will, he seems to accede to the request for the lowdown on the real Dr. Cowley: He is just a just a country boy, he says, raised on a ranch in Lay

ton, Utah. His parents named him "R Adams," the R standing alone, not abbreviating anything. In his youth he used to break wild mustangs; that's how he picked up his explosive language. The great-great-grandson of a woman who trekked across the plains behind Brigham Young in the great Mormon migration of 1848, he was also a high-school bad boy who got kicked out five times and only put his priorities in order when he was thrown out of college and found himself wrestling tires and trundling cement and cleaning spittoons for \$37 a week. He decided he'd have to find a better way to make a living.

So, now, here he is, in his 60s, a stocky, jowly man of medium height, with hair close-cropped and whitening above the ears. Controversial, often embattled, reputed to be a man of moods and tempers and outspoken insistence that his methods, developed from his research into the processes of death, are right, proper and necessary, he is also nationally recognized and highly honored as an authority on trauma care.  
 SUN MAG.

Dr. Cowley is a founding member of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons and of the American Trauma Society, of which he is now president. He has citations from the United States Congress, from the State of Maryland and from the city of Baltimore. He is or has been a consultant to governors, senators, to the military and to the President of the United States.

He has gone abroad as well, to advise on trauma, and is about to begin a program of education for foreign emergency medical technicians, to be broadcast via satellite. A new book on trauma care, published this spring by University Park Press, bears his name as co-editor; it is based, according to the publisher's catalog, on Dr. Cowley's experience and Dr. Cowley's methods.  
 JUN 27 1982

More than two decades ago, he began the studies on dying that would culminate in Shock Trauma: The human body, he found, could not recover biochemically if blood pressure was drastically depressed for more than an hour. The research began with cardiac patients; the most dramatic clinical application has been to accident victims, people bleeding to death from either obvious or internal wounds, people who would die without immediate treatment to raise the pressure and perfuse the tissues with blood.

"Look," he says, "an old guy like me, I'm in the age group for a stroke, heart attack or cancer. I've taken out lungs, and radiated the patients, and given them chemotherapy. I know that you can do all these things, and the survival rates haven't changed. If we're going to go much further, we're



Dr. R Adams Cowley, founder of Shock Trauma.

Ralph L. Robinson