



She's just "Grandma Travell" to Gordon Street.

Meet Dr. Janet Travell, White House physician,

grandmother with amazing interests and achievements

SPECIALIZATION in medicine is fairly commonplace. But there's nothing commonplace about the area in which Dr. Janet Travell specializes. It is her job to see that the President of the United States remains in good health.

This is not to suggest that President John F. Kennedy is Dr. Travell's only patient. Quite the contrary is true. Dr. Travell also ministers to the health and medical needs of the President's family, although the Kennedy children have their own pediatrician; the larger White House family of about 500—maids, valets, secretaries, chauffeurs, garage workers, Secret Service men, the Signal Corpsmen; and, "if we can save them time," as Dr. Travell puts it, cabinet officers and other high-ranking Federal appointees.

The President is averse to too much medical supervision, but it is virtually impossible for him to escape Dr. Travell's sharp eye. His private elevator is directly opposite the doctor's office in the White House, and he must pass her door every time he enters or leaves the elevator. Her keen diagnostic eye can assess the state of his health from the way he looks and walks.

Even more than most men, Mr. Kennedy is a difficult patient who does not take easily to the rocking-chair routine or the tepid swimming pool.

He has never given top priority to taking care of himself. Rejected by the Army in World War II because of a football injury, Jack Kennedy trained until he was accepted by the Navy.

In 1943, when a Japanese destroyer rammed and sank his PT boat in the Solomons, slamming him against the deck, he nevertheless directed the rescue of his crew and swam for miles towing a badly burned crewman.

After a lumbar disc operation in 1944, he embarked on a political career and was elected to Congress in 1946 and to the U.S. Senate in 1952. By this time, his crippling back pain forced him to use crutches. In 1954 a second back operation was tried. Infection set in and his condition was so grave that he was given the last rites.

In 1955 a third operation removed the plate but not the pain. That April, he hobbled on crutches into Dr. Travell's office—and a new lease on life.

I first met Dr. Travell at the 1957 convention

of the American Medical Association in New York City. Hurrying to her exhibit booth on "How to Give Painless Injections," I stopped for a quick look at an orthopedic back-rest display. The only other visitor was a large, amiable woman who was as easy to talk to as your next-door neighbor. She was full of fascinating facts about backs and chairs. Suddenly, realizing the hour, I said I must rush to catch Dr. Travell.

"You already have," the woman said with a wide smile. "I am Dr. Travell."

Long before she became a public figure, I had heard people turn emotional, almost reverent, at the mention of her name. Many, including President Kennedy, called her "a genius." One man, crippled for years by low back pain and already scheduled for major surgery, told me, "She studied my X rays and vetoed the operation; she gave me a couple of treatments with some needles, and I haven't had a pain since. That was eight years ago. I'd die for her."

Public Service at a Sacrifice

Immediately after the election, the Secret Service put her on call for whenever the President was out of Washington—as a general physician in case of accidents. She fitted easily into the Kennedy routine as a genial friend, attracting little attention from the press.

After her appointment as official White House physician, I asked Dr. Travell when she had decided to accept the post.

"There never was a decision," she replied. "After all, I'd been taking care of Mr. Kennedy for years. When the Secret Service put me on call, I knew I would be here all the time or running back and forth from New York, so I didn't accept any new patients after mid-November. Right after his inauguration the President told me, 'You'd better stay. It would make it a lot easier.' Of course, it was hard to leave New York and all my friends and patients."

There was no mention of the financial sacrifice, but at \$50 a visit against this \$20,000-a-year appointment, it must be considerable.

In many respects, Dr. Travell is an extraordinary woman. She is Associate Professor of Clinical Pharmacology at Cornell University Medical College; physician to outpatients at New York Hospital; associate physician, Cardiovascular Research Unit, Beth Israel Hospi-

tal; a research scientist and author or co-author of 85 scientific papers; a 60-year-old grandmother who skis, rows, rides, and plays smashing tennis.

She was born in a brownstone house on New York's West 11th Street, the second daughter of Willard Travell, a successful young doctor, and his wife, a Phi Beta Kappa from Wellesley.

On Janet's eighth birthday, Dr. Travell gave each of his daughters a tennis racket. In the 40-foot yard he laid out half a tennis court, painting the net on the back wall and teaching them to hit strong, swift strokes. When they got to Wellesley, no one could beat them.

Dr. Willard Travell had played on his college team and continued until October, 1959. He died Aug. 14, 1961, at 91.

Medicine was mysterious, yet familiar as bread and milk in the Travell household. Both girls decided to be doctors, Janet arriving at that decision at age seven. Like their mother, both girls made Phi Beta Kappa at Wellesley.

A classmate characterized Janet as an "energetic, vivacious, unassuming girl . . . with a capacity for doing 10 things at once . . . and doing them well." Her brilliant record at Cornell University Medical College won her an internship at New York Hospital—the second woman to achieve the post.

She lightened her labors by dancing through her nights off. At one dance she met John Powell, a young banker who had been the best college pitcher in the South but had refused several big-league offers.

All Set for Two Careers

In June, 1929, they were married and moved into the Travell house. Janet, on part-time service at the hospital, divided the remainder of the day between her new home upstairs and her new practice in her father's office.

They worked independently, yet cooperatively: "My father was a pioneer in physical medicine. I learned a great deal from him."

Dr. Janet continued doing 10 things at a time—and doing all of them well: teaching, research, hospital clinics, private practice, designing seats for planes (the tilt-back seat on the Electra airliner among others), tractors, telephone switchboards, office chairs, even toilets. "All in the interest of preventive medi-

cal trail blazer, and

By LIN ROOT

cine," she says about the latter endeavor, quoting a Greek proverb: "The mind can absorb no more than the seat can endure."

Her daughters are both mothers and artists: Janet, 28 (Mrs. James McAlee), is an operatic soprano. Virginia, 25 (Mrs. Edward Street), is a prize-winning painter.

Honors and high office have not changed Janet Travell. Her classmate's characterization applies just as accurately today. When the President warned her shortly after his inauguration that he was going to be so healthy she would "get bored to death and had better find something to do," she associated herself with the teaching and research departments of George Washington University Hospital and Medical School.

A Matter of Watchful Waiting

After the President strained his back in Canada while heaving a few spadefuls of dirt at a tree-planting ceremony, Dr. Travell saw him every day. But the President feels that, at 44, he does not need daily observation or a personal physician wherever he goes. So Dr. Travell did not accompany him to South America and Bermuda, nor did she go to Palm Beach with him in December. Instead, her chief assistant, Navy Capt. George Burkley, M.C., accompanied the President, and Dr. Travell spent the holidays with her family in Florida, joining the Kennedys specifically for a year-end examination.

For all her trail blazing, she is essentially conservative and in some ways as old-fashioned as her highly publicized rocking chair.

She and her father were lifelong Republicans until Kennedy was nominated. Then Dr. Janet worked on the "Doctors for Kennedy" campaign and Dr. Willard flaunted the flashiest "Kennedy for President" button made.

I asked Dr. Travell how she manages to work everything in and still seem so relaxed. She told me, "I've learned to utilize the minutes. Driving a car, I always have a magazine handy for traffic stops—I prop it on the steering wheel, and when the traffic moves I move. My husband says, 'Ask her what she does between midnight and morning.' I'm really a very good sleeper, but if I happen to wake up I always read something quickly. I never lie in bed just waiting to fall asleep again. There are too many things to do."



Dr. Travell sits on portico of the White House in the rocking chair she designed for President Kennedy.

She Guards the President's Health