

by 13 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches and is still going up.

The young giant now picks his way about among the light fixtures in his modest home, where the ceilings are only a couple of inches higher than he is. Dr. Humberd, who makes a study of gigantism, says he is still growing.

The Illinois giant belongs to the "preacromegalic type," thinks Dr. Humberd. The physician believes that the acromegalizing process is already beginning and that in the near future the bones and soft parts of the boy's hands, feet and face will begin to enlarge, an evidence of the overfunctioning of the pituitary body.

Acromegaly is a growth disturbance due to over-activity of one part of the pituitary gland. It usually starts after maturity and the overgrowth appears chiefly in face, hands and feet.

Robert is now a college freshman, embittered by newspaper publicity and reluctant to be measured or to discuss his Gargantuan build. He makes his pocket money by posing for photographs, for which "his charges are variable and modest, but certain," according to Dr. Humberd.

The boy's appetite is enormous, his daily food consumption running as high as 6,000 to 8,000 calories. He tires very easily and sleeps much.

The average grown man does not require over 3,000 calories a day unless he is doing work requiring great muscular exertion.

At birth, the boy weighed 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds and at six months, 30 pounds. His growth curve has been steady and continuous, without noticeable spurts and upsets, according to the physician's records.

"One cannot predict when the growth curve will level off," states Dr. Humberd. "I think the lad is still actively growing."

The height limit of the U.S. Army in the World War was 6 feet 6 inches. Among 3,750,000 men between the ages of 18 and 30, only seven cases of gigantism were found. Four of these men were only a little over height and were accepted for army service in spite of their disability, some of them serving as drum majors in army bands.

*Science News Letter, March 20, 1937*

#### MEDICINE

## Growth Control for Cells Would Cure Cancer

**F**IND a method of growth control for the millions of tiny cells that make up the body of a man and you will have the long-sought cure for cancer.

Tremendous difficulties must be overcome before this happy solution of the problem can be reached. The individual cells of the body are so small they can be seen only with the aid of powerful microscopes. Each of them must have food and water and oxygen for breathing, in order to live and do its job. Scientists in many laboratories are trying to find what the cells require for nourishment and how much of these substances they must have.

Is it too much or too little of some foodstuff that makes cells go wild and spend all their energies in growing, so that other cells are crowded out and die? This tendency of cancer cells to devote their lives to malignant growth is probably inherited, born in them when they are first formed. Injury or irritation may be the torch that sets off the wildfire growth.

Many of the irritations and injuries might be avoided, thus preventing some cases of cancer. Inherited tendencies to cancer can be bred out of laboratory animals, such as mice, but this method of control could hardly be applied to men and women.

Scientists trying to find the cure for cancer know they must search further, probing deeper into the life of the cell to learn how it grows and what is needed to make it grow in an orderly, normal way.

Difficult as the problem is, scientists believe it can be solved. Much has already been accomplished in growth control of another kind. Growth of the body as a whole is controlled by the pituitary gland, it is now known. This was learned from the discovery that dwarfs and giants of certain types had diseased pituitary glands. Years of research on this problem led finally to an extract from the gland that helps children with dwarf tendencies to grow.

It is reasonable to hope that the even more difficult step of achieving control of the growth of cells can be accomplished.

"When this day comes we will have the cure for cancer," says Dr. John J. Morton, cancer authority of the Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, N. Y.

*Science News Letter, March 20, 1937*



#### NEW PROOF

**A bone spear point found resting on the foot of an extinct mammoth—giant long-haired elephant—in New Mexico. This discovery by Edgar B. Howard of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, and his finding of stone spear points surrounded on all sides by mammoth bones, clinches scientific belief that America was inhabited by man when these prehistoric big game animals were still alive 10,000 years ago. (See SNL Oct. 10, 1936. For another discovery by Dr. Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr.; see also SNL Nov. 2, 1935).**