

A birthday record

THE journey of a thousand miles is said, in Chinese philosophy, to begin with a single step. The walker may not know how long his journey is to be, or how far he will have to go, and it was thus when John and Valerie Graves cut their first disc. The analogy of the new baby cutting his first tooth is too tempting to resist. The child, as it grew, became a remarkable pedestrian.

Everything was set fair for the new concept in medical teaching which came from a country home in Essex. There were postwar doctors whose imaginations extended beyond their practices. There was a feeling of professional isolation as it appeared that the medical schools were preparing for a greatly increased output of medical technologists. These doctors sensed that with help of the right kind they could do their job better but did not quite know how.

Industrial rather than medical technology came in on the other side of the equation. It had become possible to record sound on magnetic wire and on tape, as well as to reproduce gramophone records easily and economically. Needs and means coexisted, and it required only the vision of the small group of people concerned for the first step to be taken.

The new College was beginning to find its feet and this catalyzed the spread of recorded teaching among its membership. It must have been a powerful aid to the development of internal cohesion within the membership, and at first it was exclusive to general practice. The new College was using entirely new methods to

meet the responsibilities which it claimed for itself. This, too, must have contributed greatly to its morale and indeed to its image.

From general practice to the hospitals and teaching schools, from Essex to Europe and many countries overseas, from doctors to nurses, veterinarians, and health workers, the journey went on and on. If they were ever footsore and weary the Graves showed no sign of it. The enterprise expanded from their home into their garden and is now expanding further into purpose-built premises in a hospital complex.

The 20 year-old Service can look back with pride and forward with confidence. People are accustomed to recorded sound. Doctors in their cars, students in their lodgings, lecturers at their dais can call on first-class teachers at the touch of a switch.

Tapes can be made for audiovisual projection through a television set. They are becoming acceptable substitutes for speakers who are unable to attend international conferences in person. There are altogether new paths to be explored. The field now extends to health education of the public either *en masse* or by tapes designed for waiting-room use.

We will not try to forecast what the output of tapes and slides will be in another 20 years' time. We can be sure, however, that the devotion and dedication which has brought the Service to this record birthday will go on, and that the College owes a very great debt to John and Valerie Graves.

Extra at Exeter

THE Annual Spring Meeting of the College rotates in turn around the faculties, and the responsibility this year fell to the South-West England Faculty, the largest in the College.

The meeting was held on 15, 16, 17 April 1977 at the Department of General Practice at the University of Exeter, the first time a general meeting of the College has been held in Devon and Cornwall. Some new features were introduced by the local faculty, notably the additional half day on the Friday afternoon, which

was attended by 115 people, at which the aims and work of the Department of General Practice at Exeter were described by the four members of staff and two trainees.

On the Saturday, for the first time in the history of the College, members attending a general meeting were divided into small groups and taken to local practices. Here, the theme of "Everyday Problems in General Practice" was considered in the setting of everyday general practice. The attendance of 250 doctors meant that 25 chairmen were required, and the local faculty accepted the challenge and itself provided two thirds of