

A Page From the Past

The Executive Council of ALIMDA provided for an unusual recognition to one of its own members in October, 1964, during the Seventy-third Annual Meeting of ALIMDA in New York City. The recognition was a Resolution for outstanding performance and contributions in Insurance Medicine presented to Dr. Harry E. Ungerleider.

It is only fitting that we bring this significant historical event to the attention of our readers at this time, following the presentation of the First ALIMDA Distinguished Physicians's Award to Dr. Singer at the recent Annual Meeting in New York City.

The reading of the Resolution and Dr. Ungerleider's acceptance speech has been reprinted from the Transactions of ALIMDA, Volume XLVIII.

On that occasion the President, Dr. Paul I. Robinson, invited Dr. James R. Gudger, a former President, to read the Resolution to the audience.

"Dr. James R. Gudger - Ladies and Gentlemen: The following resolution has been prepared and I am pleased to have been asked to read it to you.

WHEREAS, the Association of Life Insurance Medical Directors of America recognizes that Harry E. Ungerleider, M.D., as he completes the maximum length of service on the Executive Council, is concluding a period of long and distinguished service with his colleagues for the good of all; and,

WHEREAS, his extraordinary achievements in the medical sciences clearly place him among those who have excelled, and, as lecturer and author, he has shared the benefits of this excellence with his colleagues for the good of all; and,

WHEREAS, his activity and membership in this Association for thirty-four years have been marked by unselfish devotion to its ideals, while ably assuming the duties of Editor of the Transactions during ten consecutive years, Vice-President, President-elect and President, followed by membership on the Executive Council for a period of fourteen years; and,

WHEREAS, his contributions in the field of insurance medicine have reflected credit on our Association and its relationships to the public and the medical profession,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that the warm appreciation of the members of this Association be hereby expressed to Dr. Ungerleider, together with all good wishes for his continuing happiness and activity in insurance medicine and in this Association; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: that the sentiments of the foregoing resolution be spread by the Secretary on the minutes of the Association.

New York City
October 5, 1964

Paul I. Robinson, President
Royal S. Schaaf, Secretary"

Harry, because of your absence from the meetings of the Council, we shall not have the benefit of your experience, wisdom, and stimulating ideas in the deliberations there, but your unselfish devotion to its aims will always be remembered. It is with great pleasure that we now present you with this scroll, in recognition of our high esteem and enduring respect.

Dr. Harry E. Ungerleider - Dr. Robinson, Dr. Jim Gudger, and my friends: It is quite easy to be emotional over a thing like this, and I won't deny the fact that I am deeply touched. However, I am going to try not to be emotional.

My late mother always said that one rose while your're living is worth many gardens of them when you're dead. I assure each and every one of you that this is that kind of a rose, and, as long as I live, this will never fade.

I don't know what to say at the moment, but the thought occurs to me that, as I stand up here before you and I look over my few years, that I have been privileged to be a member of this organization. One thing seems to stand out more than anything else, and that is, the one fact that I have been proud to be a life insurance physician.

When I first came into this business, I came from Philadelphia to New York. I knew nobody in New York, so I asked my chiefs and the elder men to let me have some letters of introduction, and I took several of these letters to these individuals. I got a rather negative reception. It seemed to me that most of those men indicated to me that when I joined this profession of life insurance medicine, I had sold myself down the river. Life insurance medicine was not very well recognized at least among the people that I saw, and these men were allegedly, or were at that time, very active and leading members in New York medicine.

I went back to see Dr. Robert Daly, who, as most of you remember, was formerly the medical director of the Equitable, and I told him about it. He said, "Well, Harry, in the first place, they don't know whereof we speak, but, secondly, you have it in your power to change that image." At that particular moment, I decided that I would try to change that image, if it were possible.

Among the things I was told to do by Dr. Daly was to look up the past transactions of the Association of Life Insurance Medical Directors. Dr. Robinson, I want to take two or three minutes, because I think we're all going to be proud of these things. One is that, in looking over the transactions and the history of the Association of Life Insurance Medical Directors and the Medical Section of the American Life Convention - and I mean both; I'm talking about the entire profession - I found many things that had been done by life insurance men, contributions of major import to clinical medicine.

The very first of these was the introduction of the sphygmomanometer into the United States. I doubt that many of you people know that the introduction of the sphygmomanometer into the United States was done by a man who spent practically his whole medical life, with the exception of his internship and his residency, in life insurance medicine. This particular instrument was introduced into the United States by Henry W. Cook, who was the predecessor of Dr. Anderson at the Northwestern National Life Insurance Company.

Secondly, along the line of blood pressure, I found out that Brandeth Symonds of Mutual Life told the medical profession, in his paper of 1922 or 1923, that the normal blood pressure was not 100 plus your age, but somewhat around 120/80, as we all know. Well, since that time, there has been a multitude of contributions to clinical and experimental medicine. I won't cite their work but I will cite particular individuals, and if I miss somebody, you can realize the strain of being up here. The strain is very great; I'm shaking!

The work of Francis H. McCrudden in the New England Mutual in diabetes; the work of the Prudential group, led by Harry Kirkland; George P. Robb at the Metropolitan; Dr. Cecil Birchard in Canada; and Paul Langner and his excellent work in electrocardiography, and so forth and so on could be mentioned. We won't say anything about the contributions from the Equitable because you all know about those. Some have had acceptance and some have not, but we won't worry about that. I must not forget Dr. Mulberg, who founded the American Diabetes Association, who was with the Union Central.

There are many contributions that have been made to clinical medicine, but, finally, the thing that really pleased me more than anything else was when I went down to Philadelphia, some year ago, and talked to Dr. George Morris Piersol, who was then the Secretary General of the American College of Physicians. He said, "Harry, as a result of contributions of your group, we are now recognizing insurance medicine as a discipline comparable to cardiology or pediatrics or any other. We are listing it as a sub-specialty of internal medicine."

I have been proud over the years to be a life insurance medical man. However, alongside that, I must also say something else. I have been proud to have been associated with this group. This has been a good group, an honest group. I think we will hear more from this group. I don't know of any other group of comparable size and age from whom I expect to hear more.

I don't look back too much. I'm like Kettering; at least, I take it from Kettering. I am interested only in the future, because, as Kettering said, this is where I'm going to spend the rest of my life.

I would suggest to you, however, if I may, that you keep up the good work of the Association of Life Insurance Medicine. Papers like Pitkin's and Frank Mathewson's, and the boys yesterday who did the laboratory work, are milestones; and I suggest that you keep this up, and have more scientific papers, more papers on life insurance medicine, and I feel that when your time comes, you will say, as I do, when it's time to be put on the shelf, "I'm proud and I have been proud to be a life insurance physician." Thank you very much."