

MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO DR. FRANCIS M. POTTENGER, JR.

by

Joseph B. Henry

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Those of us who have lived through a goodly number of years find ourselves from time to time meeting in memory of one who has been close to us, and with whom we have had fellowship. It is in that position that I come today as a friend of Francis from early college days to spend these moments thinking of him - of meanings that his life has had, of things that from his life we may draw upon as inspiration and guidance as we continue our journey along this mortal pathway.

A few months after I had come along into an Ohio farm home, Francis was born just across the street from this church. Today we come here to think about him and his contribution to life. (1)

He was the son of an eminent father, as you well know. He carried a great name. But beyond the eminence of his father, Francis had a greatness within himself, and achieved greatness in his own right. There are some things that are worthy of our thought.

One of these is his great humanity - his great warmth of feeling toward fellow human beings. This was manifest in his personal relationships, and also in his professional relationships with people. I have known some of his patients and of their great love for him. In talking with the children (2) yesterday they reminded me that it was a group of his patients who raised a sum of money which under a grant from the University of Southern California made possible one of his important research projects.

He had wide recognition in the field of medicine. It is a tremendously impressive list of recognitions that came to him, far beyond our time to recite here. He had all this honor, yet his greatest sense of reward was the inner satisfaction of knowing that through his skills some persons are living today, and that through the years ahead many will be living better because

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of things he had done. It was this great motivation to help people that was constantly behind the things he did - a concern for human welfare that sustained the drudgeries involved in his research projects.

Recognition came to him in every important medical organization within the range of his fields. In some of these he served as president, as member of the board of directors, as chairman of important committees. He made extensive contribution to the written word of medical science. One of his colleagues has spoken of him as "a great teacher." He lectured widely. Francis has known top recognition in medical science.

It was with a great sense of gratification that recently there came to him appointment as chairman of the Environmental Medicine Committee of the California Medical Association. This appointment was opening to him further opportunities in a field of major interest. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat - these were things to which he had dedicated his life to understanding and improving. He was one of the earliest to recognize the smog problem. He had spent years in nutrition research and guidance. This appointment was the outgrowth of all he had done across the years. One interesting project was a research with cats that brought him fame.

Through many generations of cats across a ten year period he kept detailed records related to such matters as the foods they ate, the effects of heat upon the foods, the various health and disease factors, the span of life, the breeding records, the virility variances under different conditions, etc., etc. - just a complete look at many generations of cats. His findings applied to humans are a very significant contribution in this field of environmental medicine.

An evidence of his interest in nutrition was his chairmanship for over twenty years of the Price Committee of the American Academy of Applied Nutrition. He was one of the organizers of the Weston A. Price Memorial Foundation, Inc., and was serving as the First Vice-President. One of the functions of this non-profit

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organization will be to house and to make available for educational purposes the works and research findings of Dr. Pottenger, along with those of other eminent pioneers in the field of good nutrition. It was because of his great interest in this project that the family suggested in lieu of flowers that memorial gifts be made to the Foundation. (3)

In the midst of all his greatness of professional achievement Francis found time for an interest in the community where he spent his life. He was active within the community of Monrovia in ways that you who live here are so well aware. He was Medical Director of Civilian Defense for this whole area. One of the first portable hospitals set up anywhere was his project over here on the school grounds of Clifton Junior High. Out of that project the things learned have influenced the art of portable hospitalization all around the world. He put his heart into whatever he did, and had a genius for doing it well.

He was a genius of diagnosis. From an older doctor friend some years ago I had learned of this man's great appreciation of the ability Francis had in the realm of diagnosis. This man had it in a measure, but he looked upon Francis as having it in a unique measure - an ability through a sensitivity of hands and touch to diagnose various ailments. Along with this genius of touch he had a rare capacity for correlating symptoms into a diagnosis that was eluding others in the medical field. Here was a man uniquely equipped to be a doctor and who brought into the science unusual and great skills. But he had not wanted to be a doctor. This was something that had been envisioned by his father. Into the field of medicine Francis had been pushed. He didn't want to be a physician.

I can remember an afternoon some years ago at their home up in the canyon. Some of us were out in the back yard wandering around. We had been giving thought to some of the projects in which Francis was engaged, and here in the midst of these various contrivances young Francis gave appraisal to the situation saying "Dad's just a frustrated engineer."

There was a great measure of truth in that statement. Here was a man who had great creative engineering capacity who was functioning as a physician. But he found a way of correlating his function and his skills in engineering. Francis held a number of very significant patents. He held one of the earliest patents in the field of radar. While a young man bedfast with tuberculosis he had spent the time with creative thought, and out of that period came a couple patents. As a young man in his internship at General Hospital he devised methods for the healing of massive burns. Out of his creative skills came a new technique for slow feeding intravenously. He hitched his engineering interest to his medical science. His most recent achievement is a third dimensional technique in the use of x-rays in order that there can be functional viewing of the internal human organism along with camera recording.

Not only did he have the capacity for creating these things in thought, but he had the skills of hand to produce them. Many an hour was spent at his lathe in the production of the intricate devices which became medical instruments for the benefit of humankind. So, how wonderful! Though this man did not want to become a physician, in the greater wisdom of the Eternal it was accomplished that he did have these skills and that they were correlated in the healing service of his fellowmen.

Now, Francis and I had met on the campus of Otterbein College. As a child I had known his father on visits he made to Germantown, Ohio. The elder Dr. Pottenger was born in Ohio. Then Francis and I had the privilege of association at Otterbein. I have treasured memories of those years. His devotion to this college in Ohio has been a high loyalty of his life. He has given much thought and time, and largely of his means to this school. It was here that he got his Bachelor of Arts degree, and met Elizabeth who shared his life for forty years and mothered his children. From Otterbein he went to medical school at Cincinnati and got his medical degree. But somehow Otterbein always held in his heart the high place of loyalty. And it was in 1965 that Otterbein College gave

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to him the recognition he so greatly deserved as "Distinguished Alumnus of the Year." How beautiful to think that he lived to receive all these honors and to know the esteem of his fellowmen!

Our association through the years was climaxed in the most cherished experience of December twentieth. I had phoned the office about another matter and learned that he was home in bed. I went up, and that afternoon we had one of those unique heart to heart fellowships that is possible for two men who find themselves in rapport. I shall long treasure the memory of that experience.

In a bed with the foot elevated, he was propped up reading the paper and answering the phone. (An old phlebitis condition of a quarter century ago had flared up again.) There were touches of humor. One of the phone calls was from his physician. It was amusing to hear this very skilled man of medical science trying to describe his feelings to his physician. After that conversation was over I jokingly said to him, "Francis, in that description it sounded like you didn't do much better than an ordinary layman." I still can hear his chuckled comment, "I guess I didn't." But his doctor had understood - having learned the language of laymen. Another of the phone calls was his secretary reporting that the services of his barber had been arranged for the next morning in preparation for an eventful day. Francis was planning to be up temporarily that next day.

For it was on December twenty first that a new phase of living was begun. He and Hilda Rethlefsen were married. There was a well outlined schedule of projects for the next twenty years. The son commented, "It was not many months ago that the song came back into Dad's heart and letters." And then suddenly two weeks later, on January fourth, it all ended when at the door of a Glendora bank Francis suffered a massive heart rupture. (Autopsy showed no relationship to the phlebitis.)

The ways of wisdom of the Eternal are beyond our understanding. In this fellowship we knew a little over two weeks ago, I can report to you that Francis was a man of great faith in God. He and I had never talked along this line before. But this day we shared our

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thoughts out of the depths of our sincerity. And he expressed his complete confidence in the fact that there is a great Mind behind this universe, and that it is in the guidance of that Mind that man functions at his highest. He also expressed a complete confidence that when this mortal life comes to its close there is something wonderful on ahead into which mankind enters and experiences a continuity of being. Though he had difficulty with some of the conventional theology of mankind, he was a man of strong faith, and he expressed it beautifully that day.

So, in the light of these things about Francis, he has given us an heritage - an heritage of memory, an heritage of challenge that to the measure of our ability we live in dedication of self to the service of our fellowmen and rely upon God our Father for help along the way.

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(1) The memorial service was held on January 7, 1967 at the First Presbyterian Church, Monrovia, California. Dr. Pottenger was born May 29, 1901 at Monrovia. He passed away January 4, 1967 of a massive heart rupture as he was walking out of a bank at Glendora, California. Interment, Live Oak Memorial Park, Monrovia. Officiating, the Rev. Harry G. Brahams and the Rev. Joseph B. Henry. Funeral directors, Temple and La Gorge.

(2) The children surviving their father are: a son, Francis M. Pottenger III, on the faculty of the University of Hawaii at Honolulu; daughters, Miss Margaret Pottenger of Tustin, California, and Mrs. James (Barbara) Shumar of Fresno, California. A son, Samuel, preceded his parents in death. Also, there are eleven grandchildren.

(3) Address correspondence for the Weston A. Price Memorial Foundation to: Alfreda F. Rooke, Curator, R. R. 3, Box 399, Escondido, California 92025; or to Dr. Granville F. Knight, M. D., President, 2901 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 345, Santa Monica, California 90403.

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Dr. Francis M. Pottenger, Jr., of Monrovia, California, graduated with a degree of Doctor of Medicine from the College of Medicine, University of Cincinnati, in 1930. He was associated with late his/father, Dr. E. M. Pottenger, at the Pottenger Sanatorium and Clinic for Diseases of the Chest for a number of years. In 1941, he opened the Francis M. Pottenger, Jr., Hospital in Monrovia for the treatment of non-tubercular diseases of the chest and deficiency diseases.

Dr. Pottenger has made extensive studies of both animal and human nutrition, and has contributed numerous articles to medical periodicals on nutrition and deficiency states.

He is a member of several of the national and local medical societies.

His civic interests have included membership on the Scientific Committee of the Air Pollution Control District, active membership on the Air Pollution Committee of the Los Angeles County Medical Association, Medical Service Chief, Civil Defense, Region 1, Area D.

Membership in following Societies;

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American Medical Assos.  
California State Medical Association  
Los Angeles County Medical Association  
American Therapeutic Society  
American Association of the Advancement of Science  
American Academy of Applied Nutrition  
American Anti-Arthritis Association  
Fellow of American College of Physicians  
American Geriatrics Society