

CURRENT COMMENTS

To Remember Chauncey D. Leake

Number 7, February 13, 1978

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Oh! Dear Gene, - joy to
you all for what you do so
well! Current Contents is better
all the time! So, go into
the New Year, and into the
many, many years with
love and good cheer, and
rich satisfactions will be
yours.

Chancey

Chancey

Chauncey Depew Leake, my friend and mentor, died on the day I received this last note from him, January 11, 1978. On the evening before his death he had attended "An Evening With Chauncey Leake," sponsored by San Francisco's Bohemian Club, where he and about 100 friends and colleagues read several of his poems. Chauncey collapsed while receiving

an ovation and died a few hours later from a ruptured aortic aneurysm.

Chauncey Leake was so well-known to scientists throughout the world that it seems almost redundant to repeat the facts of his long and varied career. Eight years ago I paid tribute to him in this space for the many contributions he had made to the success of ISI®

and to my own career.^{1,2,3} I cannot provide a complete biography of Chauncey in the limited space available here. I do hope some young scholar can find the time to do a complete and proper account of his life.

I first met Chauncey in 1951, when he was chairman of the advisory committee to the Johns Hopkins Welch Medical Library Indexing Project.⁴ Chauncey often stressed the value of review articles, not only for integrating and synthesizing scientific accomplishments but also as a tool for information retrieval. As a result I studied the makeup of review articles very carefully and observed the peculiar similarity between the structure of indexes and the structure of sentences in reviews. In a review paper a sentence is followed by a citation. In a traditional subject index the same is true. But in a citation index the situation is reversed!

From the early days of the Welch Project and steadily thereafter Chauncey had a continuing influence on me, ISI and its products. He was chairman of the Editorial Advisory Board for *Current Contents*[®] /*Life Sciences* from the beginning. He also served as a member of the editorial advisory board for *Index to Scientific Reviews*[®].

The encouragement to publish my recent book, *Essays of an Information Scientist*, also came directly from Chauncey. Starting almost five years ago, Chauncey urged me almost weekly to collect these essays into a book.⁵

Chauncey also contributed an

occasional column to *Current Contents/Life Sciences*. Most readers probably do not realize "Calling Attention To," which appeared in *CC* since its inception actually began in 1940 as a mimeographed monthly for Chauncey's friends. It was always a gold mine of information, since Chauncey's tastes were both wide-ranging and exceedingly discriminating. "Calling Attention To" found page 25 of the *Life Sciences* edition of this issue of *Current Contents* regrettably, his last.

During our 27-year friendship Chauncey and I exchanged thousands of letters through a voluminous correspondence. Chauncey's letters were always a source of advice, encouragement, inspiration, enthusiasm and energy. At the top of each letter he would comment on the current weather: "Cool and windy," "Foggy, smoggy with sun breaking through and, during the recent California drought, "We had rain! We pee!" When conveying holiday greetings, he would invariably write "Happy Holiday!" His praise for ISI and for many of his own projects was unrestrained, and his large, graceful handwriting reinforced the encouragement he always freely gave.

Chauncey was always a popularizer of science. He believed that scientists have a responsibility to communicate their findings to the public. He applauded excellent scientific journalism, writing "Those who get knowledge across to the people are as important in social enterprise as those who discover it."⁶ He also believed



Russell Leake

Elizabeth and Chauncey D. Leake in May, 1968

scientists should keep aware of the public's perception of science, and was a great fan of the ISI Press Digest.

During his lifetime Chauncey wore many hats. He was a pharmacologist, philosopher, chemist, writer, physiologist, historian, administrator, and humanist.

Chauncey was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, on September 5, 1896. By his own account, he came from "middle class stock." His mother's family were German craftsmen, and his father, Frank W., was a coal-shipper for the Central Railroad of New Jersey. While growing up, Chauncey was "thrilled" by Mark

Twain, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, and the exploits of Sherlock Holmes.⁷ In high school he was on the football and track teams and was manager of the baseball team.

In 1917 Leake graduated from Princeton, where he had majored in philosophy, chemistry, and biology. Later that year he enlisted in the New Jersey National Guard. In 1918 he was transferred from a machine gun outfit to the Chemical Warfare Service, where he served in the defense effort against war gases. After the war he was asked to stay on and investigate the effects of morphine.

Chauncey thought of going into medicine, but chose instead first to get a Ph.D. and start an academic career. He never did receive an M.D., although he earned his Master's in 1920 and a Ph.D. in physiology and pharmacology in 1925 at the University of Wisconsin, where he taught for the next eight years. Later he would become one of the few non-M.D.'s to be dean of a medical school. While at Wisconsin he married Elizabeth Wilson, a microbiologist.

In 1928 Leake established the Department of Pharmacology at the University of California, San Francisco, where he was Senior Lecturer in the History and Philosophy of Medicine and Senior Lecturer in Pharmacology. From 1963 to 1966 he was Professor of Medical Jurisprudence at the Hastings College of the Law, San Francisco.

Leake's contributions to pharmacology include studies on the metabolic action of anesthetics and narcotics, the regulation of the production of red blood cells, and the biochemistry of the brain and central nervous system; studies on leprosy; and analysis of the conceptual basis of pharmacology as a scientific discipline.

He was an early believer that anesthesiology is a physiological science and not just the duty of the surgeon's assistant. He introduced divinyl ether as an anesthetic agent in 1930, developed Vioform and carbarsone in the treatment of dysentery, contributed to the development of tranquilizers, investigated the effects of pH on

blood vessels, and used conceptual models of the correlation between chemical structure and biological action which he called *biochemistry*. Gordon Alles developed the first amphetamine drug in Leake's laboratory. Leake always believed that a scientist should try a new drug on himself before trying it on volunteers or patients.

Chauncey was a pioneer in developing institutions, including M.D. Anderson Hospital for cancer patients, and the Baylor Medical School in Houston. He founded, edited from 1943 to 1955, *Text Reports on Biology and Medicine*, and was a consulting editor of *Geriatrics*, *Excerpta Medica*, *1 Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, and *Archives of International Pharmacology*. Also, for more than 15 years he wrote a column called "Review of Reviews" for *Annual Review of Pharmacology*.

To mention his most notable honorary and administrative positions, Chauncey has been president of the American Association for Advancement of Science (in 19), consultant to the National Research Council, the Public Health Service, and the National Library of Medicine; chairman of the American Medical Association's Section of Pharmacology; president of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine; president of the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics; president of the American Society for the History of Medicine; president of the History of Science Society; and president of the Am

Quotations from the Writings of Chauncey D. Leake

"Let us not delude ourselves by dreaming that great achievements are imminent. Let us eschew 'breakthroughs' lest we incur frustrating breakdowns. Let us strive for equanimity for our quest for the 'truth,' remembering that whatever we call 'truth' is tentative and subject to revision as our verifiable knowledge increases, and that 'even unwelcomed truth is better than cherished error.' Let us patiently support the long-term scientific endeavor. It would be brash indeed to think that the secrets evolved over billions of years will yield overnight even with the most generous of financial backing."

Why search and research? *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 193:54-8, 1965.

"There seems to be little point in exhorting men to be good. That has been the way of the moralists for centuries and it hasn't worked with startling success. Neither fear of punishment nor hope of reward has been particularly fruitful in promoting good conduct among men."

Ethicogenesis. *The Scientific Monthly*. 60:425-53, 1945.

"Whether or not society can abolish poverty, the principal cause of frustration among the mass of people, remains a problem and may always be so. The struggle of the have-nots to get what the haves have is an ancient one, and *les miserables* are ever present. *Les miserables* can get out of their predicament and frustrations by seeking individual goals which are modest and obtainable and, having reached them, by moving along in accordance with their abilities. It is not wise to have champagne tastes when one merely has a beer pocketbook. It is wise, however, to condition oneself to work toward obtainable goals, being honest with oneself as to capability. The satisfaction coming from modest goals and purposes that have been reached may start self-generating cycles of satisfaction. This can effectively prevent dissatisfaction and its potentially disastrous psychodynamism. The sense of satisfaction, no matter how minor, is a comforting one and an encouragement to seek it again."

Human purpose, the limbic system, and the sense of satisfaction. *Zygon* 10:86-94, 1975.

"It is unwise for us to be hoping for longer lives if we do not continually strive to make them more worth the living.... Mere longevity is not a worthy goal for geriatrics: the proper social function of geriatricians is to make life more satisfying for older people. This depends neither on mechanical spare-part gadgetry nor on 'genetic intervention,' but rather on the much more difficult day-to-day psychological guidance."

Aging slowed down? What for? *Geriatrics* 21:113-4, 1966.

"Lacking directional ethics, we cannot apply our scientific knowledge to purposes we can agree upon as worthy of universal social endeavor. Our science seems to become applied chiefly to making individual and national status symbols. What gadgetry is directed toward cleanliness, comfort and convenience, is well diluted by styling for false-fronting, and the waste is monumental. What profit longer life from medical science if there is so little chance yet for living it with graciousness, dignity, self-confidence and self-reliance? What social value has our science if it is applied so successfully to the possibility of destroying us all?"
Our unbalanced bias. *Journal of the Franklin Institute*. 269:355-61, 1960.

"Science is a great adventure. It is the culminative effort on the part of peoples all over the world to get verifiable knowledge about themselves and their environment. There is nothing more important than seeking the truth about ourselves and our environment, even if we do not like it when we find it. It may take time to realize that unwelcome truth is better than cherished error, but the common experience of each one of us is testimony to the wisdom of this judgement. If we can understand that voluntary agreement constitutes the validity of scientific conclusions, then we can all realize how important science is with respect to freedom and democracy. We also may continue to appreciate how necessary freedom is for the advance of science."

Unity and communication in science and the health professions.
New York State Journal of Medicine. 60:1496-1500, 1960.

can Society of Pharmacology. He was Vice-President of the American Humanist Association in 1953 and 1954, and received its Humanist Pioneer Award in 1977.

During his active and prolific lifetime Chauncey wrote over 25 books and more than 600 articles. About ten years ago, I was planning to write a book, but just could not find the time. So I asked Chauncey how he was able to do so much writing. He wrote, "You will never *find* the time. You have to *take* it."⁸

The publications listed on pages 13-15 have been selected to indicate the breadth and depth of Chauncey's interests. The quotations reprinted on page 9 will serve as examples of his crisp, incisive writing style. He wrote on everything from pharmacology to history, from ethics to music, from travel to the limits of understanding. All of these works are characterized by Chauncey's enthusiasm, wit, and humanism. He always tried to bring a human perspective to scientific and medical subjects—and a disciplined, rational point of view to music, art, and philosophy. He also prized his honorary membership in the National Association of Science Writers.

Chauncey was also an enologist, and was particularly interested in the therapeutic uses of wine. In fact, he served as a consultant to the California Wine Growers Association, and on at least one occasion he recommended wine as an aid to restful and refreshing sleep. "Long experience has shown that wines are probably safer and more effective than any other kind of

muscular relaxing and sleep producing agent,"⁹ he wrote.

Another of Chauncey's pet topics was the human life span and aging. He wrote a regular column *Geriatrics* in which he discussed such topics as the maximum human life span, the differences in expectancy for men and women, free radicals and aging, and care of dying older persons.

He loved poetry, art, and drama and enjoyed working with theatrical groups. His enthusiasms extended to music—especially opera and jazz. More than ten years ago he described with characteristic beauty and flair this scene in a New Orleans jazz hall:

The lights were dim. The benches were crowded with a motley group of swaying and clapping peoples of all kinds. The jazz group was rocking away—a little red-gartered and white-haired, wizened pianist at the dilapidated upright, the old banjoist strumming alone, the trombonist "frogging," the trumpeter and clarinetist swaying their instruments to the ceiling, and the bald, grinning drummer banging out with clicking syncopatic and cymbals.¹⁰

Here Chauncey demonstrated his versatility. His writing style is one one might expect from an accomplished novelist, rather than from a scientist!

With all his other interests Chauncey was a kind of international citizen. He lectured almost every country in the world and travelled more widely than almost anyone I've met.

In his philosophy, as in his

practical affairs of day-to-day living. For example, the title of his three-volume series is *What Are We Living For? Practical Philosophy*. His books on philosophy arose out of the talks he gave to University of California Ph.D. candidates in the 1940's. Those who came to these sessions at his home near San Francisco got no academic credit, so Leake offered cookies and coffee "as bait."

Chauncey was certainly a learned and a rational man, but he was also affectionate and full of surprises. He attributed the good health he enjoyed throughout most of his life to his habit of walking up and down the hills of San Francisco. An excellent description of Chauncey appeared in *Saturday Review*, 20 years ago. The author noted,

Dr. Leake gives freely of himself with an effervescence that bubbles gaily in the mind long afterward. Met face to face, he greets the world through an imp that lives deep down in his eyes and peers out sharply through a sort of venetian blind that opens and shuts with a disconcerting speed. His Santa Claus laugh rolls gently all over a room.... Only his soap-white hair and kindly gentleman demeanor betray to strangers the scholar beneath Dr. Leake's jolly medicine-man facade.¹¹

Leake was a perennial and enthusiastic optimist. For instance, in 1960 he wrote,

As our world-wide communications continue to improve, we may be sure that the traditional aspirations of people everywhere for a better life will push

for the balanced trio of logic, ethics, and aesthetics: our science will become more widely understood, and as our inherent love of beauty exerts itself, our applications of scientific knowledge may be ever more wisely directed toward social welfare and the good of the people. We are witnessing a new resurgence of enthusiasm for understanding science, for achieving worthy purposes in human welfare, and in preserving the natural beauties of our world, even in our increasing industrialization.¹²

Chauncey, himself a Renaissance man, was above all a believer in broad, well-rounded education. Upon his wife's death last year, he established the Elizabeth and Chauncey Leake Fund for the Humanities at the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston. Its purpose is to foster well-rounded medical education by providing the community of the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, with access to cultural events in the arts and humanities. The events sponsored by the Fund will include ballet, poetry readings, concerts, and lectures. Contributions may be sent to the fund's director, William B. Bean, at the Institute for Medical Humanities, University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, Texas, 77550.

Although I have learned that Chauncey's papers will be deposited with the National Library of Medicine, I do not know what provision, if any, has been made for his memoirs. It has often seemed to me that certain foundations might help

men like Leake compile their memoirs while they are alive. Too often the papers of great scholars are collected after their death, when it is too late for their own critical evaluation. This is an unfortunate waste of brain power. Perhaps some foundation could identify such persons and set up a fellowship for graduate students to assist in writing their memoirs. This would benefit not only scholars and historians, but also would be an excellent educational experience for the students. Spending a year or so helping to write the memoirs of someone like Chauncey Leake could be vastly more worthwhile than spending a year in classes.

There is a popular song today called "You Light Up My Life." I can think of no expression that better describes the effect Chauncey Leake had on everyone who knew him. Everywhere he went he

brought sunshine into the lives of the people he touched. His out-
 is amply expressed by the poem
 wrote and sent to his friends on
 last New Year before his death:

Greetings for a New Year

*The Old Year, like an old man,
 withers away, and dies;
 the New Year, like a bubbling bad
 gives its pulling birth cries*

*What a great potential
 has the New Year:
 for happiness, for joy
 for sorrow, for work,
 for play, and for love.*

*Let this New Year fulfill
 for you its full potential,
 and come to its end
 with a rainbow
 arched high above.*

Chauncey Leake

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