

Recognition of Retirement of Richard Roland Grayson, M.D.

October 17, 2008

Many years ago, the father of internal medicine, Sir William Osler, wrote the following words to describe his colleague, Dr. John Y. Basset. Dr. Osler said, "I write this to tell you the story of a man of whom you have never heard, whose name is not written on the scroll of fame, but of one who heard the call and forsook all and followed his ideal." Richard Roland Grayson recently was made an honorary member of the medical staff at Delnor-Community Hospital after forty-five years of service. He joined the medical staffs of Delnor Hospital and Geneva Community Hospital in 1963, when he moved here from Elmhurst, Illinois, where he had been practicing since 1960. He was one of the first physicians in the area to practice the speciality of internal medicine. To that end, he served as the Chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine for three years and also was Committee Chairman of the Bioethics Department from 1990 to 1995.

During this time, Dr. Grayson was a senior Federal Aviation Medical Examiner. He served the tri-city area by being Medical Examiner for the Department of Rehabilitation and Disabilities, taught a course on science and religion at Aurora University, was a member of the Saint Charles Board of Health from 1963 to 1990, and was a physician consultant for the Illinois Youth Center for a number of years. He also had a particular interest in the effects of stress on the body, especially its relation to peptic ulcer disease. In that regard, he founded the American Academy of Stress Disorders and served as its national president from 1971 to 1975.

But who was Richard Grayson? I have often been fascinated as to how a person gets to a certain point and have enjoyed looking into the history that led them in that direction.

Richard Roland Grayson was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1925. In 1943, at age 18, he became an apprentice seaman in the U.S. Navy during WW II. He rose to the rank of midshipman and finally to ensign. Following WW II, he briefly attended Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana.

He then transferred to the University of Illinois and in a span of 3 ½ years, obtained both a bachelor of science degree as well as doctor of medicine degree. Because there was no formal training in internal medicine at that time, he then spent two years at Cook County Hospital in their rotating internship program.

The next ten years of his life were very prolific. From 1950 to 1952, he served in the U.S. Naval Reserves, rising to the rank of captain. From 1952 to 1957, he was in private practice in Perryville, Missouri. Recognizing in 1958, that he needed more training if he wished to exclusively concentrate on diseases of adults, he took a fellowship in endocrinology and cardiology at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Dr. Grayson has published 26 articles in his lifetime, many of which were published between 1952 and 1960. He was the first person to describe diseases of the lung in silo fillers in the farms of Missouri. This article entitled, "Nitrogen Dioxide Pneumonia: A New Disease in Agricultural Workers", was published in the Annals of Internal Medicine. This was a significant landmark article in describing that condition for the first time ever. A few years later, he wrote an equally significant article which was published in the American Journal of Medicine, entitled "Factors Which Influence the Radioactive Iodine Thyroid Uptake Test". I have found that this article has been cited numerous times, both in other articles as well as textbooks and journals. Dr. Grayson also authored other articles with interesting titles such as the following:

"The Wandering Liver and Tachycardia", "Carbon Tetrachloride Nephrosis", "A Technique For Using Suction In The Case of Snake Bites" and finally an article on a condition which I am certain nobody in this room has ever seen or heard of before, "Hemangioendotheliosarcoma Of The Small Bowel With Metastases to the Heart Causing Hemopericardium".

Outside of medicine, Dr. Grayson has an FCC amateur radio license and was a member of the Toastmasters, Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis. He was a member not only of the Mayflower Descendants, but also a member of the Sons of the American Revolution. I also discovered that he was a member of the Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War, because his great-grandfather, Andrew Jackson Grayson, fought at the battle of Shiloh, under General Ulysses S. Grant.

Dick, we congratulate you for your life as a husband and father, doctor and researcher, historian and patriot, soldier and humanitarian.

In closing, I was able to find a letter written many years ago by the Chief of Medicine, Carl V. Moore, at Washington University School of Medicine. This letter was written to Charles Smith, who at that time was the administrator of Geneva Community Hospital in Geneva, Illinois. Dr. Grayson was apparently attempting to obtain medical privileges at the hospital. The comments made by Dr. Moore at that time are still as relevant today as they were then regarding Dr. Grayson. I read the letter as follows:

“I first knew Dr. Grayson when he was doing general practice in a small community some forty or fifty miles south of St. Louis. He impressed us all because he not only carried on a busy practice, but made the effort to come regularly to St. Louis for rounds on the medical service.

He is a forceful person with a lot of energy and drive, but is cooperative and most capable. Any man who finds it possible to remain productive while he is clinically so occupied, deserves a tremendous amount of applause.”

Dick, you deserve our tremendous amount of applause this evening for an outstanding career. We congratulate you.