

Consp - Burchell

HOWARD B. BURCHELL
SCHOLARSHIP FUND

January, 1988

To the Contributors of the Howard B. Burchell Scholarship Fund:

Thank you very much for contributing to the Howard B. Burchell Scholarship Fund. We have already accumulated over \$40,000 and expect that the fund will grow in the future.

As you may have been aware, the scholarship was officially announced at a party honoring Dr. Burchell held in Minneapolis on November 22, 1987. We have enclosed for your interest a copy of Dr. Burchell's comments at that time. We hope you will enjoy reading them.

Thank you again for your generous contribution and if we can provide any additional information regarding the Howard B. Burchell Scholarship Fund, please do not hesitate to contact one of us directly.

With very best wishes for the new year.

Yours sincerely,



David G. Benditt, M.D.

Arthur H L From M.D.

Arthur From, M.D.



Robert Van Tassel, M.D.



Ronald E. Vlietstra, M.D.

DGB/jc

enc:



American Heart Association

Minnesota Affiliate, Inc.

4701 West 77th Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55435 (612) 835-3300

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A "THANK-YOU" COMMENTARY

Since rumors of an invitation to be the honored guest of the Minnesota Heart Association and the Museum of Electricity a few months ago, I have suspected that I might be asked if I would like to say a few words, (possibly detecting some emphasis on the "few") and wondered how I could respond to express my heartfelt appreciation. It was most appropriate that the invitation has included Margaret, my wife, and supporter of 45 years.

Slow conduction is characteristic of aging or narrowed tissue, following critically-timed stimulation; so in tortured metaphor, you might expect from me a slow and muted response. However, there might be an echo, a vocal "V₃". You might tolerate this, though possibly engendering the fear of repetitive responses, echolalia and verbigeration. With rapid stimulation from all of you, if aged tissues generate glycosides, I could exhibit a triggered tachyphonia.

Overtly on this occasion, it is fitting that my comments have roots in, 1) aging; four score years, 2) medical electricity, and 3) in this year of 1987, the Constitution of the United States, its bicentennial.

You are well acquainted with the fact that at the time of their signing the Declaration of Independence, or of the Constitution, the men were young, averaging 45 years. Both groups had a roughly similar age distribution curve. Both groups display a similar longevity record: Thirteen of the 56 signers of the Declaration reached the ages of 80 or more; six of the 39 affixing their signature on the velum in Philadelphia attained octogenarian status. About the same percentage (20%) of our United States presidents, now deceased, lived beyond 80.

Glancing over the obituaries of members of the Association of American Physicians over the past 10 years, I noted that the number who had reached octogenarian status was just over 50 percent. Some nasty young Turk might offer the caveat, that, for this group there might have been some pre-selection of the long-lived, some members of A.A.P. being "aged" even before being elected. In any instance, in the parlance of the street, the attainment of the age of 80 is no "big deal" statistically.

The state of longevity has become more common over the past two centuries; regrettably, the ratio of the burden of the medical care of these elderly, to their social contributions has, overall, also increased. Although life has been extended for many, there has been no real expansion of the abscissa in survival graphs, thus, the mortality slope for the elderly population has become much steeper.

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I wear my St. Andrews tie this evening for the reason that it was this ancient Scottish university which conferred on Franklin his Doctorate degree. This was 228 years ago and it was given in recognition of his experiments and theories in electricity.

At 80 years of age, he had recently returned from France (an interesting time having been spent there). He was soon plunged into the work of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, often playing a skillful role, negotiating the differences between the sometimes quarrelsome delegates.

Before expanding further upon some Franklin lore, I shall mention a Doctor Hugh Williamson, a friend and co-worker of Franklin, who received an M.D. from Utrecht, (whence our guest Professor Meijler comes) was a signer of the Constitution, and eventually a famous octogenarian. He had an interesting career in varied fields: One of his papers (1775) was "Experiments and Observations on Electric Eels", an item included here as pertinent to one of the sponsors of tonight's festivities, the Bakken Museum and Library.

I grew up with the wit and wisdom in the sayings of Benjamin Franklin, as published in Poor Richard's Almanac. After growing up (an assumption), I have collected Franklin biographies and possess the published volumes of his letters. One comment in one of his letters I have quoted frequently: "If there is no other use discovered of electricity, this however, is something considerable, that it may help to make a vain man humble."

With a special Netherlands friend here, maybe it is permissible to mention a minor event recorded by Franklin in his autobiography: Aged just 17, he was on his way from New York to Philadelphia in a small boat and "a drunken Dutchman fell overboard; ... I reached thro' the water to his shock pate and drew him up so we got him in again. His ducking sobered him a little and he went to sleep, taking first out of his pocket a book which he desired I would dry for him." (It was Bunyan's Pilgrims Progress (in Dutch).)

Franklin buffs will remember that, as a young printer, he published Cicero's rambling discourse on old age (1744) in large type, so that the elderly could read it easily. Over forty years later he made the closing speech at the Constitutional Convention, giving the admonition (which might be heeded by all of us); when one has convictions, "to doubt a little of his own infallibility". Another bit of advice which stuck in my mind as a boy was: "Let thy discontents be thy secrets, if the world knows them, 'twill despise thee and increase them." That takes an extra moment of thought!