

August 17, 2010

Dear Dr. Winters:

What an overdue honor for George P. Noon. I was fortunate to have worked with George Noon in 1982 at The Methodist Hospital. I had a patient who came down from Sante Fe with a very complicated coronary problem. George did a lateral thoracotomy and placed a saphenous vein graft in the distal circumflex coming off the descending aorta. At that time, this was the first patient treated with this technique. The patient was always complimentary of Dr. Noon, as were all the patients I shared with Dr. Noon. What a great guy and what a deserving award.

Dr. DeBakey was certainly an innovator, but it is also important to recognize the team that he put together at The Methodist Hospital.

Very truly yours,

Richard R. Heuser, M.D., FACC, FACP, FESC, FSCAI
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August 30, 2010

Dear Dr. Winters:

I read your Editorials and have benefitted from your thoughts and literary skills. I've become more cognizant of the latter since I have spent several years writing a manuscript for a book which is finally coming down the final stretch.

"The Elders" struck a response, of course, since I've now entered my 82nd year (having been emeritus for 9 years). I agree, generally, with your thesis, particularly your development of the concept of "The Elders" which has connotations and implications independent of other terms we use to convey the need for advisors/consultants/role models/supervisors. The term to which I've become somewhat averse is "mentoring." It is improperly used, abused, and not well understood. Many of my colleagues who use the term "mentor," have no idea who Mentor actually was. My definition of a mentor stems directly from the relationship between "Mentor and Telemachus." Your definition of "elder" circumvents many of my objections and allows more people with broader attributes to play a role in the nurturing and maturation of younger colleagues. Good work.

Of course I can't be in absolute agreement with every statement you make. I guess I would not vote for a National Elders Day since, in many people's minds, the celebratory occasion gets some people "off the hook" for doing the right thing. The laudatory and beneficent activities on a single day can obscure the fact that "elders" wisdom, in the context you use the term has to be involved and should be recognized for their contributions every day. It's like giving a lecture on ethics/professionalism to young colleagues and to ensure that they "get it," it has to be a part of a daily work rounds. The elders you cite in your own life got their recognition and rewards by the attention you gave them and the contribution they made to your career development. Of course, everyone is not an elder just because they lived a long time.

Describing Dr. Thomas Durant's contribution to your career development fixes you (and me) in time. There's absolutely no way the importance and value of a thorough physical examination can be integrally and importantly involved in a House Officer's education today. (I hear a lot of protestations to that statement but my observation and experience confirms its veracity.) Keep up the good work. All the best.

Sincerely yours,

Gottlibe C. Friesinger, M.D., MACC, MACP
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