

PROGRESS IS OUR MOST IMPORTANT PRODUCT

BY

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PRESENTED TO THE CHIT CHAT CLUB

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

JUNE 11, 2012

"PROGRESS IS OUR MOST IMPORTANT PRODUCT"

Michael Thaler

Delivered before the Chit-Chat Club of San Francisco on June 11, 2012

Gentlemen,

To begin with, let me confess that the choice of a topic for the Chit-Chat essay turned out to be much more of a challenge than I expected. The problem was not the lack, but the plethora of choices, each clamoring Choose Me! Choose Me! And yet, none of these worthy, clever topics seemed quite right for an after-dinner speech and discussion. At one point I considered writing an essay on how to choose a topic for an essay. Then it hit me: how to select the right topic for the right occasion before the right audience.

Whether we are conscious of it or not, and no matter what the subject may be, each of us goes through the process of crafting a statement that speaks beyond the attendees of the moment to an invisible audience that is part of a larger conversation, one that has been in uninterrupted progress for over a century. We have several new members who heard the Chit Chat archive at Stanford described as a depository of former presentations, perhaps may even remember the considerable discussion about ways and means of making this "treasure" more accessible to members and scholars. Yet, to my knowledge, only one researcher, back in 1965, examined the collection since its installation at Stanford in 1957.

When I accessed the archive in 2010, it was with a specific purpose in mind, to which I shall return momentarily. I had no inkling that the archival material, all of it, not just the essays, would eventually draw me in like a good mystery story, until I felt compelled to examine every scrap of paper accumulated since 1874, and to arrange the individual categories statements in separate folders and in chronological order. Again, to emphasize, not just the essays, but also the letters, obituaries, members' publications, announcements of meetings, menus, CV's of prospective members, financial statements, each in its own folder. When the task was completed, I realized that, taken together, the entire collection constituted a rare historical record, a testament of sorts, left by a highly accomplished, privileged, stringently self-selected group of men, constant in their rituals, unvarying in

their number, representative of the professions, business, academic, religious, judiciary and government sectors. A record extending for an unbroken 136 years in 2010. And I realized that the key and possibly unique feature of the Chit-Chat archive as a resource for historical research is that these deeply engaged, knowledgeable and influential individuals expressed and recorded private opinions and sentiments, unconstrained by fear of the press and other forms of public exposure, a forthright and uninterrupted commentary, a midrash of sorts, on the contingencies, ever-changing values, and obsessions of their times. Moreover, looking beyond the essays to the voluminous epistolary materials and informal commentary on critical issues of the day, the long tradition of communications recorded on paper has come to an end, and with it the possibility of maintaining a record of this hermeneutic value. So my presentation tonight is both an attempt to demonstrate how useful such a collection can be as a novel and source of certain kinds of intimate information, as well as a requiem of sorts for the epistolary way of expressing one's innermost thoughts and feelings.

What originally brought me to Stanford and the collection was an interest in a larger-than-life figure familiar to some here, whose full name, which he insisted on spelling out, covered most of the space on his office door at UCSF: John Bertrand de Cusame Morant Saunders, member of the Chit-Chat Club and, by the way, Chancellor of UCSF, 1960-66. His tenure as Chancellor was cut short by a spectacular fight between the forces of traditional clinical medicine, the art and science crowd, and the post-Sputnik wave of scientific research devotees, marching under the banner of Progress. Chancellor Saunders, with support from most of the clinical faculty at UCSF and the California and San Francisco Medical Associations, refused to yield control of the medical school to the new breed of fulltime researchers and basic scientists led by Julius Comroe, Director of the newly established NIH-funded Cardiovascular Research Institute at Moffitt Hospital. The confrontation soon spilled over into the newspapers, and the President of the UC system, Clark Kerr, dismissed Saunders in January, 1966 for being "a flat tire on the wheel of progress", according to one prominent journalist. The subsequent meteoric rise of UCSF as a bastion of medical research and cradle of the biotechnology industry was, and continues to be, a history of general and personal interest to me, having myself joined the faculty at UCSF in 1967 as a Young Turk of the new scientist-clinician variety. (slides of clippings).

As mentioned, Saunders was a member of the Chit-Chat club during this period. I went to Stanford in search of his personal perspective and reflections on events that polarized the medical school and clinical establishments in San Francisco along the major fault line of science versus art of medicine, and led directly to the expansion of UCSF from Parnassus to Mission Bay supported by the likes of Genentech, Chiron, and a dozen other biotech start-ups the school had spawned. Indeed, Saunders read a magnificent essay in 1977 before the Chit-Chat Club, entitled "Progress". Here are the opening lines from Saunders' essay: "Attendance at a recent discussion on the advancement of science and medicine and their influence or lack of influence in harmonizing and contributing to existing social needs and order, provoked reflections in the mind of the writer on the very nature of "progress" itself. It was evident enough that most of those participating in the discussion regarded "progress" as an essential dogma or universal law which hardly needed even the most cursory examination. It was equally evident that for the majority of today to be regarded as "unprogressive", would be held as a hurt to personal esteem, or dismissed as a pejorative, empty charge... One began to wonder whether the concept of "progress" was in itself no more than an act of faith."

Saunders then examines in impressive detail the idea of progress from historical, philosophical and social points of view. On page 25 of the essay, he quotes from John Bagnell Bury's "The Idea of Progress" where the Oxfordian contends that "Progress is no more than an optimistic name for the process of change." Saunders adds: "'More than half a century has gone by, which provides an opportunity for examining contemporary thought and testing the validity of the ideas on the elements of progressivist thought and their survival after one of the most pessimistic periods in history, culminating in World War II and its aftermath. The idea of the unity of mankind is still with us, present in bipartite form, as an ethic and methodologically. Its ethic is fairly strong when conceived as an ideal of equal justice for all men. But methodologically, as embodied in the United Nations, in nationalism, in comparative sociology, and in the differences of national culture, its existence, to say the least, is tenuous. The belief in perfectibility and the power of reason to bring about improvements in human relations and the conduct of men is open to serious question, enhanced by the loss of educational standards and the weakness of institutions. The

schism between knowledge and feeling as represented by science and the humanities, or between reason and passion, has deepened. The assumption that "enlightenment" will bring virtue and happiness is still no more than an assumption, since students of behavior do little more than build on speculation and remove themselves from the empirical truths of biological fact...The state of war, regarded by the fathers of the enlightenment as mankind's greatest blight, has historically become the norm of societies who talk glibly of pursuing peace. Saunders concludes (on Page 27): "Many now hold that one cannot pass directly from facts to values. If not, then the schism between the arts and sciences cannot be bridged. Since standards are difficult to establish, there are those who reject the idea of Progress, as they believe that all standards are subjective or relative, and will always remain so. Rationalists maintain that principles of appraisal are available and our knowledge progressive; that is, the nature of ideals and principles of justice will continue to grow. But self-determination often ends in violence, for, whose ideals, and whose justice shall prevail? Progress is conflict, or progress is understanding. Which? Where is the middle road?"

Several times after my arrival in San Francisco in late 1967, I observed a tall, graying man in a white faculty coat picking up litter and empty soda cans in front of Moffitt Hospital. Intrigued, I inquired at the Information Desk about this strange man. "Oh, that's old Chauncey Leake. He's a Pharmacology professor, and he thinks he owns the place, so he comes by once or twice a week to make sure the entrance to the hospital is clean."

Thirty years later, in preparation for a career change, I was enrolled as a graduate student in History of Health Sciences in the very Department created by UC President Clark Kerr as a consolation price for the forced retirement of Chancellor Saunders. My thesis was on the making of a new Medical Ethics since World War II (re-named Bioethics in the post-60's). I chased down the American edition of an English manual printed in 1792 and used by the AMA in 1846 to frame a set of rules to regulate professional behavior among scientifically trained American physicians. It had been published by Chauncey Leake in 1927 under its original title "Percival's Medical Ethics"; the second edition had been released in 1975. Resting in the History Section of the library at UCSF, it featured a handwritten note of appreciation from Leake, "for the kind help given to me by the staff in preparation of this, the second edition of a book issued 48 years ago, when

it fell flat as a mud-pie." (slide). I don't recall whether the thought crossed my mind at the time that the philosopher/ethicist who wrote the voluminous historical Introduction to Percival, and the man in the white coat picking up garbage in front of Moffett, were one and the same, but by the time I accessed the archive at Stanford and stumbled upon Chauncey Leake's 50 letters addressed to the secretary of the Chit Chat Club in the decade of 1947-57, I discovered the answer. Delivered at the Memorial service for Chauncey D. Leake (1896-1978) held at UCSF on March 1, 1978, the eulogy by Milton Silverman, a friendly journalist, attested that "He taught all of us to despise pollution and litter, whether it be litter on the sidewalk, or litter in a journal article, or litter in the mind." (slide).

What was Chauncey up to in all those intervening years? Biographically, he moved to Galveston, Texas in 1943 to become Vice-President of the Medical School of the University of Texas, relocated to Columbus, Ohio to serve as Dean of the College of Medicine at Ohio State University, then returned to UCSF and the Chit-Chat Club in 1963. His active involvement with the Chit-Chat Club began in 1936, as Secretary from 1940-43. The extraordinary arrangement worked out with Chauncey's close friend and successor as Secretary of the club, Osgood Murdock, resulted in a decade of letters which Osgood read as part of the discussion after each monthly presentation of the essay at the club. He was equally as active at the Bohemian Club, where he managed stage lighting at the Grove.

But Chauncey's intellectual passions (and he was passionate about everything he cared about) were unquestionably devoted to fostering the various manifestations of "Progress", which to Chauncey meant the application of scientific methodology, reasoning, and explanatory power to humanistic and moral concerns. He was particularly smitten by the idea that empirical knowledge of the natural environment and evolution, acquired by observation or experimentation, could illuminate the eternal tensions and "misunderstandings" between the 'art' and 'science' of medicine. In his essays, journal articles and voluminous self-published poems, Chauncey addressed the same dilemma as Saunders, but from the opposite side of the fence.

In an 33-page essay (plus 4 pages of references) entitled "Ethicogenesis" (a typical Leake oxymoronic formulation which pleased me with its echo of

"Making Ethics", the subject of my 1998 thesis), Chauncey presented to the Chit-Chat Club in August, 1942, he evokes the idyllic setting under the redwoods of the Grove for a discussion of the influence of German and French philosophers on the biological sciences, with the aim of formulating "a biological basis for ethics". On page 25, (slide) we induced from the plethora of examples he writes: "The conversation developed as to whether or not it might be possible to discover a naturally operative principle that governs human conduct. It was appreciated that such a principle might be of the same character as the principle of the conservation of energy. (slide) As a tentative statement of such a principle, we induced from the plethora of examples in universal experience the following: "The probability of survival of a relationship between individuals humans or groups of humans increases with the extent to which that relationship is mutually satisfying." "...This statement was subjected to considerable analysis at the Philadelphia meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in December, 1940. Agreement was general that we had succeeded in the formulation of an objective scientific principle, operative in an ethical manner, but independently of metaphysical implications or considerations." He continues on page 28: "There are a multitude of historical examples of the gradual adjustment toward more mutually satisfying behavior patterns between groups of people. Unfortunately, these have usually involved war. It remains to be determined whether we have the intelligence to utilize more peaceful means."

Then Chauncey majestically proceeds further (page 30): "...As Bayliss reminds us, Ostwald made the second law of energetics the basis of a general rule of conduct, "Der Energetische Imperativ", "Waste not free energy". When living things come into conflict with each other, behavior patterns develop by trial and miss". (note the evolutionary underpinnings) These patterns tend to balanced adjustment between them, in which it seems that evolution of free energy occurs as the potential of strife equalizes. Among humans coming in contact with each other, similar behavior patterns tend to result from the probability of trial which are mutually satisfying - and in which it appears again that diminution of free energy occurs... An optimistic possibility exists in the continued discovery of methods of changing our environment and of adapting ourselves to it. Chauncey conclusion follows "logically": If then it is appreciated that relationships between humans tend to survive in proportion to their mutual

satisfaction derived from them, it is incumbent upon an individual to help make the relationship in which he participates with another individual as satisfying to the other individual as to himself." (Back to Torah and the Sermon on the Mount). As long as there is lack of mutual satisfaction, there will be an attempt to adjust relationships between individuals or groups of individuals toward a greater degree of mutual satisfaction. This attempt at adjustment, frequently involving psychiatric aggressiveness or submissiveness, may be relatively violent, as in homicide, suicide or war!"

Twenty three years later we find Chauncey in pursuit of naturalistic, non-metaphysical solutions to ethical problems from the pages of the JAMA. (slide). In an article entitled Why Search and Research? In the October 4, 1965 issue, he restates his "mutual satisfaction" theory from the Bohemian Grove, adding "This was formulated long before we realized that there might be an evolutionary built-in neurochemical mechanism for satisfactions. This statement is, one may note, a reflection of Aristotle's harmony ethic."

In the manner of his dying, Chauncey lived up to his optimistic view of the human condition. He expired suddenly from a ruptured aortic aneurysm on the stage of his Grove celebrating an "Evening for Chauncey", clothed in the Orange coat of his beloved Princeton, surrounded by redwoods and his Bohemian companions. At the moment he fell, he was happily reciting his poem on "Advice to a Young Poet" which ends with "Then you will find that all you want to say, will flame in all the sacred ancient way." As far as we know, these passionate, mystical words were the last Chauncey uttered.

Move to Oust Chief

Big Feud at UC Medical School

By David Perlman
Science Correspondent

A bitter, disruptive struggle has arisen within San Francisco's medical profession, and on its outcome hinges the future of one of America's great medical schools.

The battle centers on the status of Dr. John B. de C. M. Saunders, Chancellor of the University of California Medical Center here.

Eight of the UC Medical School's major department chairmen have urged President Clark Kerr to replace Dr. Saunders.

A petition launched unofficially by leaders of the San Francisco Medical Society, whose members serve on the medical school's part-time clinical faculty, is asking the UC Regents to retain him.

By last night, some 100 of the approximately 200 facul-

Bitter Struggle at Medical Center

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ty members had signed the petition.

"No one in the past 50 years," says the petition, "has done as much in establishing the proper rapport between the medical center and the practicing physicians of the State of California."

Despite this praise, a highly confidential report from the national organization which accredits all medical schools in America has been distinctly critical of the medical school's administration here, The Chronicle learned last night.

And although the medical school is nationally famed as an excellent one, it has suffered for years from serious shortcomings and delays in academic expansion.

Its teaching programs have been hampered by these difficulties, according to its own best-informed faculty members:

- For three years the



UC'S DR. SAUNDERS
He's under fire

nine years ago, and Chancellor in 1960.

He would not discuss the conflict raging around him yesterday, but informed sources said he believes the move against him was in-

"sought to maintain the proper balance of clinical instruction, basic research and public service."

The petition said the moves for his ouster originated in "pressure from a group which is widely recognized as having its primary interest in extending research activity at the medical center."

In point of fact, the major pressure for Dr. Saunders' dismissal comes from the school's full-time faculty leaders who, while known as outstanding researchers, are also mostly responsible for teaching.

ARGUMENT

These men insist that good research and good teaching cannot be separated. They argue that superb research facilities attract superb medical teachers. They insist their own research attracts outstanding young medical scientists as graduate students, and that these men in turn become tomorrow's outstanding teachers.

1/25/66

Chancellor of UC Medical Center Quits

By David Perlman
Science Correspondent

Dr. John deC. M. Saunders, chancellor of the University of California Medical Center here, has resigned his post after a year of controversy over his role as chief administrator of the huge academic complex.

Dr. William O. Reinhardt, dean of the Medical School for the past three years, has also resigned.

President Clark Kerr immediately declared he is asking the UC Academic Senate's help in finding successors to fill the two top posts. The resignations are effective July 1.

Dr. Saunders' resignation, which had been expected for many months, was an-

UC Medical Center Chief Quits

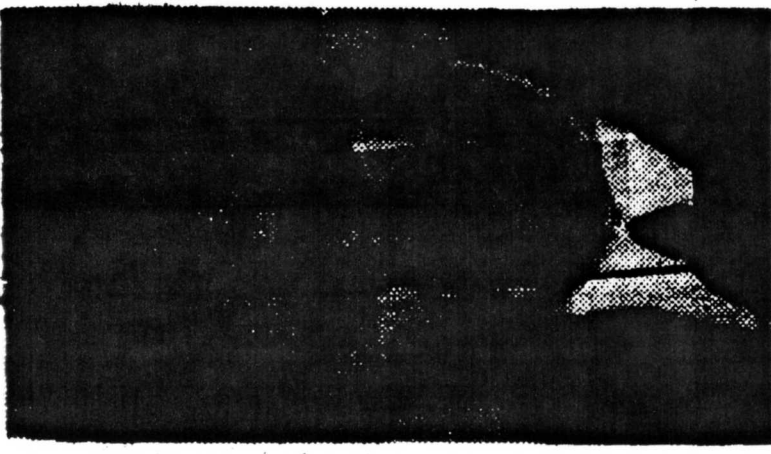
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nounced yesterday by Edward W. Carter, chairman of the Board of Regents. He also announced that a brand-new Regents Chair of Medical History has been created at the San Francisco medical center, and that Dr. Saunders is resigning to accept the new professorship.

Carter said the regents hope that when Dr. Saunders retires from the faculty the medical history chair will be re-named in his honor.

Kerr, in an unusually terse statement, extended the university's thanks to both Dr. Saunders and Dr. Reinhardt for their "leadership" at the medical center "during its most significant period of expansion and reorganization."

CONFLICT



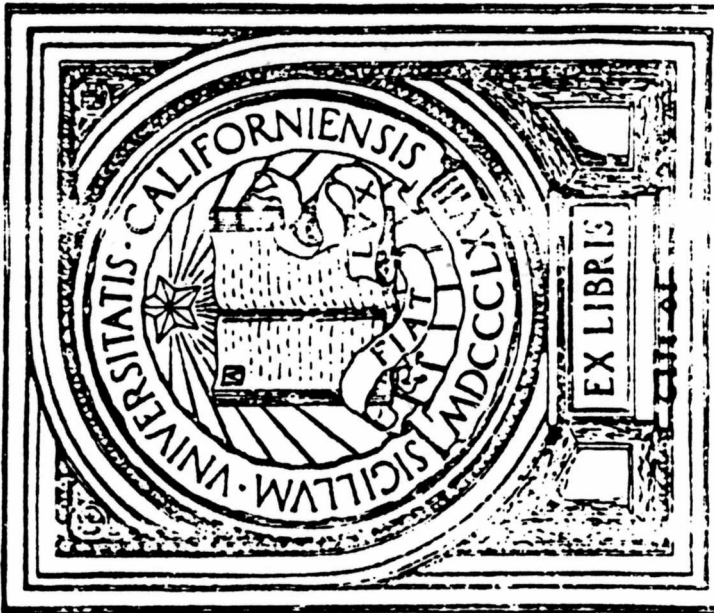
DR. SAUNDERS Target of criticism

leaders in the State Legislature to support him.

Dr. George K. Herzog Jr., president of the San Francisco Medical Society, praised Dr. Saunders' "effective work as chancellor" yesterday, and noted that he continues to be a highly respected delegate to the California Medical Association

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Chauncey D. Leake, M.D.

HISTORY COLLECTION

Why Search and Research?

Chauncey D. Leake, PhD

Neurochemical Factors in Search and Satisfaction

"Why research?" is a frequent question. Usually the answer is because we are curious, but this prompts us to ask: why? about what? Then we are engaged in the very process we are discussing.

Search and research are part of being. All living things repeatedly search and research for food and for the chance to reproduce. As the roots of plants search for nourishment in the soil, the most primitive kinds of life seek energy from their environment.

Here, then, is a basic biological answer to our question, why search and research: it is because we seek satisfaction through whatever conditional reflex produces this sensation. Even beneath the highly sophisticated methodology of scientific research, the goal of personal satisfaction through achievement remains paramount, no matter how we may try to disguise it as status or other symbols of prestige.

From the University of California Medical School, San Francisco.

Reprint requests to Medical Students' Research Training Programs Office, University of California School of Medicine, San Francisco 94122 (Dr. Leake).

Ours is an age of scientific predominance. The consequences of such imbalance are apparent everywhere: in population pressures with their resulting frustrations and in the despoilation of our world. Nevertheless, the unremitting search and research for the "truth" about ourselves and our interlocked environment may in itself give us the verifiable knowledge which we may learn to apply with increasing effectiveness to the increasing satisfactions of all.

Years ago some of us amused ourselves one happy afternoon in the California redwoods by experimenting with the idea of deriving a scientific basis for an ethic. In the approved scientific method, we sought a descriptive naturally operating principle governing the relationships between individuals or between groups of people—a principle operating whether we would be aware of it or not, or whether we would like it or not. From the plethora of human experience, we induced such a principle: "the probability of survival of a relationship between individuals or groups of individuals increases with the extent to which the relationship is mutually satisfying."⁴ This was formulated long before we realized that there might be an evolutionary built-in neurochemical mechanism for satisfactions. This statement is, one may note, a reflection of Aris-