TRANSACTIONS OF THE PACIFIC COAST OTO-OPHTHALMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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TRANSACTIONS OF THE PACIFIC COAST OTO-OPHTHALMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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THE PACIFIC COAST OTO-OPHTHALMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

was founded on April 17, 1906 . . .

the day before the great earthquake and fire in San Francisco. This delayed the first complete meeting until 1913 in Portland. The founders included DRS. ADOLPH BARKAN, KASPAR PISCHEL, and C. F. WELBY, of San Francisco, J. F. DICKSON of Portland, and W. H. ROBERTS of Pasadena.

There were 100 charter members.

The original area included California, Oregon, and Washington. The region now encompassed includes the thirteen Western States, the Provinces of British Columbia and Alberta in Canada, and Mexico.

The membership now exceeds 1300. The attendance of 25 to 35 percent of our membership at the annual meetings is a welcome indication of the keen interest PCOOS members have always maintained in the exchange of views and experience with each other by means of scientific presentations, informal discussions, and social contacts.

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WARREN A. WILSON, MD
President

GEORGE MORGAN, MD
Guest of Honor

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MEDICAL TRUANTS

*Warren A. Wilson, MD**
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

This paper will mention some physicians and persons who started out to be physicians but never completed their training, choosing instead to go into some unusual, often more glamorous fields. In such a brief presentation, it will be impossible to name all who might be of interest, and the author asks the reader's forgiveness for not including his or her favorite medical truant.

SOLDIERS

My interest in medical truancy dates from the winter of 1942 when I was on duty as a captain in the Army Medical Corps at the Station Hospital, Fort Mills, Philippine Islands, better known to the world as Corregidor, the name of the island on which the fortifications were built. The Station Hospital was a lateral of the Malinta tunnel, which had been constructed by a farsighted commanding general in 1929. In 1942, Fort Mills was General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters for USAFFE (United States Armed Forces Far East), and subsequently for General Jonathan M. Wainwright. There were numerous laterals off of the main tunnel for ordnance, quartermaster supplies, offices, sleeping quarters, etc. The main lateral was given over to the hospital, including smaller laterals used for wards, operating rooms, etc.

My assignment at that time was attending surgeon, which in army parlance meant caring for outpatients. I was a board-certified ophthalmologist when ordered to active duty but became an otolaryngologist by act of congress since I was assigned at my first station, Fort Ord, to practice ear, nose, and throat as well as eye. With the onset of the war, and arriving Christmas night from duty at Sternberg General Hospital in Manila, I

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became a member of the surgical service. As such I did considerable general surgery as well as the rest of the field of medicine, including obstetrics.

On this particular day I have in mind, a number of casualties had been brought in following an air raid. I had performed triage and was assigning patients to operating teams. When everything seemed to be taken care of, there was one wounded soldier who had a leg and thigh wound that looked like hamburger. As was customary, still wearing the suntan uniform, I scrubbed and put on the usual sterile gown and two pairs of gloves, gave a spinal anesthetic, and had a nurse anesthetist watching the patient while I took off one pair of gloves and proceeded to clean up the wound. The patient had moved his leg satisfactorily preoperatively, but on exploring the wound many bone fragments were discovered. At this point a voice in back of me wished to know if I required any help. I replied, "Hell, yes! Get scrubbed." In a few minutes a gowned and gloved Filipino officer began to assist me. I realized that he was very competent but he didn't want to get in my way or take over the case, although I would have been glad to have had him do it. It took two hours to repair the wounds and put the patient in traction.

At this point the officer suggested we go outside for a cigarette, since smoking was not permitted in the tunnel hospital. I agreed with alacrity, and as we took off our gowns I was staring not at the caduceus of the Medical Corps but at the General Staff Corps insignia, and there were two stars on each shoulder. He put out his hand and said "We haven't been formally introduced. My name is Valdez." And so I met my first "truant," Major General Basilio Valdez, Chief of Staff of the Philippine Army (Figure 1). Naturally I was curious about his background. He said that his big regret of World War II was not performing surgery, but that there was a tradition in the Philippines for doctors to follow other fields of endeavor, as had our second "truant," the great hero of the Philippines, Jose Rizal (1861–1896), a practicing ophthalmologist in Manila in the 1890s. He was the nonviolent humanitarian leader of the revolution against Spain and was executed by the Spanish in 1896. Rizal Square commemorates him in Manila.

On questioning, general Valdez stated that as a lieutenant he had served in France in World War I, in the French Red Cross, and later with the American Forces being trained under the well known surgeon, Col. William L. Keller. When he returned to the Philippines, he was commissioned a captain in the constabulary medical department, and within a few years he was promoted to Colonel in command. The Philippine Constabulary was instituted when the Americans took over the Islands at the close of the nineteenth century; it was a nationwide police force organized along military lines and became the basis for the Philippine army in the year or two prior to World War II.

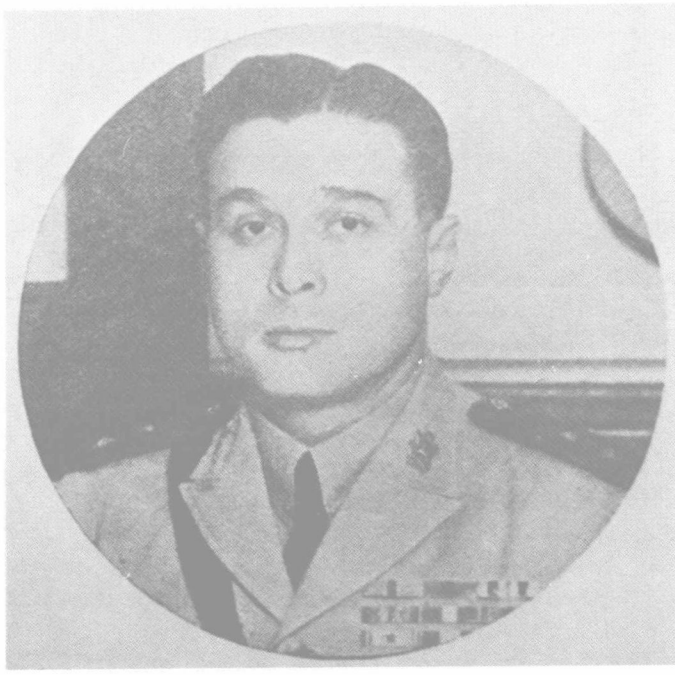

Figure 1. (Wilson)
Major General Basilio Valdez

The explanation was reasonable but did not explain how General Valdez went from Captain, Medical Corps, to officer in the line until one realized who had appointed him. The governor-general of the Philippines from 1921 to 1927 was Leonard Wood (1860–1927), and one must understand his background to see how this all came about. Wood graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1880, and after practicing a short time near Boston he entered the Army Medical Corps as a Lieutenant. He served in the border areas of the West and led patrols against the Indians even though he was a medical officer. He received the Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism at that time. When the Spanish-American War began in 1898, he was a captain in the Medical Corps and was suddenly promoted to the rank of colonel in command of a very famous cavalry regiment whose lieutenant colonel was a man named Theodore Roosevelt. Within a short time Wood was promoted to Brigadier General and Roosevelt to Colonel, where he became famous as commander of the Roughriders during the campaign in Cuba. In 1903, as President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt converted Leonard Wood from Major General of Volunteers to Major General of the Regular Army. Wood continued to serve until retiring after

World War I. He was appointed governor-general of the Philippines in 1921, and it is thus understandable how a former captain, Medical Corps, would appoint another captain of the Medical Corps to a position of responsibility in the line.

Many physicians in history have served with distinction as fighting soldiers. There were numerous examples during the Civil War. One Los Angeles physician that I knew served as an infantry officer in World Wars I and II. Joseph Warren (1741–1775) of the distinguished Warren family of surgeons in Boston, and brother of John Warren, became a Major General of the militia when the revolution was breaking and at the Battle of Breeds Hill, better known as Bunker Hill. He was killed in action.

Hugh Mercer (1721–1777) was a graduate of the University of Aberdeen and served as a surgeon in the Army of the Young Pretender at Culloden Moor in 1745. He emigrated to the New World in 1747 and practiced in Philadelphia and then Fredericksburg, Virginia. He was a Colonel in the Revolutionary Army, was promoted to Brigadier General in 1776, and served at the Battle of Princeton, where he was mortally wounded.

A famous "truant" was John Shaw Billings (1838–1913), who graduated from the Medical College of Ohio and was a surgeon in the Union Army during the Civil War. In 1864, while on duty in the Surgeon General's office, he pioneered the Surgeon General's library, which in 1952 became the National Medical Library at Bethesda. He designed the plans for the first Johns Hopkins University Hospital in 1875. In 1880 he brought out the Index Medicus Catalogue. In 1895 he became professor of hygiene at the University of Pennsylvania. Next he moved to New York as director of the New York Public Library. His organization of this institution was perhaps his most outstanding work for which he will be long remembered.

My first meeting with the next "truant" was on February 7, 1945. At that time I was a prisoner of war and the American Commanding Officer of Bilibid Prison and Hospital in Manila, Philippine Islands. I had been the senior medical officer under the Japanese, who had left about noon on February 4th. The American forces arrived that evening. On February 7th, General MacArthur and his staff came down to inspect the prison, and General MacArthur wished to see every patient in the compound. As the Commanding Officer, I was naturally on his left; however, he had a large staff, and, since I weighed only 96 pounds at the time, compared to 172 pounds when I weighed in for the fight, I was easily pushed aside. However, after a few minutes, two large hands lifted me by the shoulders and pushed me back up on the General's left. At the end of about four hours, General MacArthur and his party went to a different compound to interview a group of civilians that had been interned there. The big hands turned me around, pointed to his aide's insignia and said, "This doesn't

Figure 2. (Wilson)
Dr. Roger O. Egeberg

mean a thing; I'm a doctor and I won't see a doctor pushed around." This was my introduction to Dr. Roger O. Egeberg (Figure 2) and the start of a long friendship.

Dr. Egeberg is a graduate of Northwestern Medical School. He practiced internal medicine in Cleveland for ten years prior to World War II and was on the clinical faculty at Western Reserve Medical School. When World War II broke, the medical unit formed at that university was one of the first to leave this country and was sent in the winter of 1942 to Australia. He served on detached service there, and when General MacArthur wanted a medical officer to serve on his staff, Dr. Egeberg was chosen. He had arrived in Australia as a Major and subsequently made Lt. Col., Medical Corps. Then, during the last year of the war, General MacArthur promoted him to the rank of colonel as one of his aides.

Following the war, Dr. Egeberg became Chief of Medicine at Wadsworth Veterans Hospital in West Los Angeles and was a Clinical Professor at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine. Ten years later, he took the medical directorship of Los Angeles County—University of Southern California Medical Center. Subsequently he was Medical Director of Charities for Los Angeles County. In 1964 he became Dean of USC School of Medicine, holding this position until appointed Assistant Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare by President Nixon in 1969.

PHILOSOPHERS

It is not surprising that many philosophers have studied medicine. A few of the outstanding ones will be mentioned. Aristotle (384–322 BC) was the son of Nicomachus of the Asklepiads, who were hereditary physicians. Aristotle apparently never practiced medicine but certainly made a number of sage observations about man, animals, and a number of medical conditions, although his fame rests on his philosophic work.

Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) was a Jewish rabbi, a physician, and one of the great scholars and philosophers of his time. His greatest scholastic work was on the Jewish law, which he felt needed to be recorded as a reference. Of several medical books, his most important was a book on hygiene entitled *Regimen of Health*. Although born in Cordoba, Spain, he lived in many parts of the Mediterranean area and died in Cairo.

Roger Bacon (1214–1294) graduated from Oxford and studied in Paris, including medicine as part of his other endeavors. He had many interests and advocated the study of languages; he was probably the first histologist in that he first recognized cells using a primitive microscope. He was one of the early architects of the scientific method and perhaps introduced it, as he emphasized the need for mathematics and turned away from much of the theology and philosophy of his time. Although spectacles were worn by the ancient Chinese as an ornamentation and decoration of dress and the use of a magnifying glass had been known in antiquity, the actual use of spectacles for reading perhaps should be credited to Roger Bacon.

Francois Rabelais (1490–1553), at his father's request, entered a Franciscan monastery and later became a Benedictine, but he abandoned monasticism and began studying law. He wandered for some years as a secular priest and studied medicine at Montpellier and practiced at Lyons. He then went back to the church as a curate. He is most famous as a writer, expounding his philosophy through the famous satire of Gargantua and his son Pantagruel.