

Dr. George Flessas Memorial Endowment



George Harold Flessas was a child of destiny. Early signs of intelligence and acuity evoked attention from his teachers in that he was double promoted from fourth to sixth grade. Later they wanted to do the same - sixth to eighth grade. Our mother said no, feeling he was too young to be competing with older boys.

One of George's school projects was a replica of the Taj Majal constructed of two large bars of Ivory Soap, with his mother's handbag mirror serving as the lagoon. His project was so striking it was on display in the large window of the Brookline Trust Bank for many months!

During his high school sophomore year, George contracted rheumatic fever and while recovering, he used his Christmas gift – a microscope – to study bacteriology. One of my chores, before I could go play ball, was to go to the still pond and gather algae and fungi for his studies.

George then constructed a hand drawn, notated compilation of his studies. So unique, with his circumspect handwriting, this book was put on display in the high school science department. These projects, coupled with teacher recommendations, garnered two scholarships, \$50.00 each, from two Brookline fraternal organizations. This one hundred dollars paid George's tuition for one year at Mass Aggie (Massachusetts College of Agriculture, now University of Massachusetts). For room and board money, George waited on tables at various Amherst frat houses. In the summertime, it was off to the seashore to wait on more tables for money to pay his college bills.

World War II broke out – George was in R.O.T.C. Cavalry at Mass Aggie – and this engendered induction into the Army. He was then notified he was selected for the Army's specialized medical training program. George thought he was to be trained as a field medic, but he learned he was to go to medical school to be a doctor! In those days, two years of pre-med was a pre-requisite of medical school and coupled with the fact that George was much younger than the others, gave grave doubts of completion. Nonetheless, he completed medical school at Boston University and finished second in his class! George served his internship at St. Mary's Hospital in Madison, Wisconsin, and he served a residency at Boston City Hospital from 1950-1951. In 1951, George was selected as one of eight young pediatricians nationwide to attend a world symposium to study industrial medicine, atomic physics, nuclear chemistry, and the effects of radiation on children at the Harvard School of Public Health.

In 1952, George began to serve on the staff of the Boston University Medical School and the Pediatric Services Department at Boston Children's Hospital. From 1955-1956, he was an instructor at Boston University.

In 1957, George joined the medical staff of Noble Hospital, settled in Westfield, and the rest is history! Alas poor Westfield, ye knew him well! Oh what outrageous stories ye can tell! George served as Chief of Medicine at Noble Hospital from 1969-1970, and as Chief of Pediatrics from 1981-1983. He was

credited for implementing the Continuing Education Program at Noble Hospital in the early 1970's, and he served as Chairman until his death in 1990. George was a popular participant in the "Noble Follies," the Little Theater Group in Westfield, and he was a member of the American Legion Post 124. George was well-known for his support of staff, his cheerfulness and his jokes!

My two favorite vignettes of my brother concern his tiny, neat handwriting. Wherever he was stationed during the war, he sent a penny postcard home with enough information that anyone else would require two full pages! It was fun squinting to read those postcards! Secondly, George visited us regularly and one time he had to write a prescription for one of my children. But the druggist was hesitant to fill the prescription, indicating that no doctor in history ever wrote so neatly and legibly! Still skeptical, he did fill it. Whence I said, if he had seen George's handwritten book about the bugs, he would have known it was him!

This scholarship was established following the death of Dr. George Flessas in November 1990. His family, friends, colleagues, and patients generously donated to this permanent memorial. This endowment lets those who have been circumstanced by fate know that there are people who are ready, willing and able to assist with your quest in life.

Written by: John Flessas

October 1, 2005