Dedication Service: The Louis G. Welt Fellowship Fund

University of North Carolina School of Medicine
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

DR. MORRIS LIPTON:

In the unique value system by which we in academic life live, there is a special currency by which we assess our wealth. We most highly value our contributions to science, the application of this science to the improvement of patient care, and our impact on students and colleagues. By these criteria, Dr. Welt was a very wealthy man with a very diversified portfolio. Dr. Gottschalk, an eminent scientist and a long-time colleague of Dr. Welt, will tell you of his contributions to basic science and its interface with clinical practice. Dr. Fallon will speak of Dr. Welt's contributions to the creation of the great Department of Medicine in this school. Dr. Welt could never limit himself to a parochial view of his department. He also saw it in the context of the total medical school; and Dr. Denny, Chairman of the distinguished Department of Pediatrics, will address himself to Lou's contributions to the Medical School and University. Finally, Dr. Manire, Chairman of the Department of Microbiology and a long-time close friend of Dr. Welt, will offer us a brief vignette of this complex and engaging man.

DR. CARL GOTTSCHALK:

It is uniquely appropriate that we gather in this room for the dedication of the Louis G. Welt Fellowship, for in this room and in the laboratories across the hall Lou accomplished much of that which established him as the leader of American nephrology. I am not engaging in hyperbole when I say that Lou was the most outstanding nephrologist in this country and he was generally recognized as such—witness his positions as President of the American Society of Nephrology, chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board and President of the National Kidney Foundation, President of the Association of Professors of Medicine, Member of the Council of the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases, Member of the Institute of Medicine, and author and co-editor of the two best American books on nephrology. His position resulted from a constellation of achievements—in research, in teaching in this room, in the laboratories and at the bedside, through his writings, by his leadership in affairs of nephrology on the national scene, and from his powerful personality.

This is not the appropriate time nor place for a cataloguing and critique of Lou's scientific accomplishments, but I do want to mention the major categories of his contributions. In the earlier years they related to disturbances of body fluids and electrolyte metabolism and their effect on kidney function and in more recent years to the introduction into the clinical sphere of the concepts of membrane transport and the consequences to the patient of disturbances in membrane phenomena. It is in this latter area as the "translator," to use Lou's term, that I think he made his major contributions. This was due to his understanding of the clinician's role as he stands between the patient in the bed and the basic scientist in the laboratory. Lou was comfortable as a clinician and as a laboratory investigator. He fully recognized
that his limited area of competence precluded him from being a basic scientist as such, but he was familiar with the ideas and methods of the basic scientist in his area of clinical expertise, and he was unusually adept at wedging the principles of basic science to the art of clinical medicine. He was honest as a scientist, knew the limitation of his techniques, and had a passion for science. He was youthful in his outlook, continually intrigued by new ideas, and enthusiastic and eager in their application. These attributes were transmitted to the young people working with him, and their education was another of his passions.

When speaking or writing Lou had the ability to express his thoughts with unusual clarity and elegance. Lou's credo as the "translator" of basic science to clinical care is contained in the summary remarks of his Whitehead Lecture, "The Art of Medicine," given in this room, from this platform, from this podium, on September 14, 1966, to the entering Class of 1970. I would like to read them to you:

Let me urge you to permit yourself to be excited by and enjoy your work, exploit to the fullest the opportunity to learn how to learn, and recognize the full import of the responsibilities for which you are preparing yourself—responsibilities that are weighty, but with a measure of satisfaction that must be difficult to earn in any other way. Be assured that your studies of the basic sciences are, in fact, basic to your care of the ill, and as you proceed in clinical medicine you will simultaneously have to re-examine your knowledge of the basic sciences. Medicine will become more of a science, not less. If you are to achieve skill in the art of medicine, you, then, must be more of a scientist, not less. If the basic premise of this argument is intact, there is no room for a dichotomy between the science and the art of medicine, because they are woven into a single cloth which can be yours to wear.

DR. HAROLD FALLON:

There is no accomplishment of which Lou Welt was more proud than his contribution to the development of the Department of Internal Medicine at Chapel Hill. He left Yale to become Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of North Carolina in July of 1952 and was promoted to full professor in September of 1954. From the inception, he played a special and substantial role in assisting Dr. Charles H. Burnett in the recruitment of faculty and house staff for the new department. Although the two men differed remarkably in personality and temperament, they shared the same rigorous standards of academic excellence, and they set the highest goals for the future development of the department.

The ultimately fatal illness that forced Dr. Burnett's retirement from the chairmanship deeply saddened the department and had a dispiriting influence on its growth and development.

In July of 1965 Lou Welt was named the new chairman. With the support of the faculty and the dean, he set out to restore the confidence and high expectations of a decade earlier. His leadership, energy, and personal involvement with every major issue quickly reestablished the direction and growth of the department. This has truly been a department in which the academic environment has encouraged all to achieve at their highest level of competence. Although individuals and their successful careers were always his first concern, many new programs and ideas were introduced during Lou Welt's tenure as chairman. Five new divisions were established: endocrinology, immunology, community medicine, clinical pharmacology, and medical genetics. New training programs were developed, existing ones revitalized, and educational experiments begun. The original OEO-supported community health program, the sabbatical program for practicing physicians in the state, the clinical research unit, the combined efforts of medicine and pediatrics in primary medical care, and many other programs were significantly influenced by Lou Welt's ideas, enthusiasm, and ability to utilize available resources for the best interest of the total
academic program. However, there was never any doubt on the part of his house staff about his special high regard for the burdens, sacrifices, and difficulties of physicians in the field. In contrast to most of us in academic medicine, he actually had experience in private practice before returning to Yale for his specialty training in nephrology.

At the time Dr. Welt accepted the chair at Yale, this department had achieved many of the highest hopes and aspirations held earlier by both Drs. Burnett and Welt. Lou Welt's critical role in developing the exceptional academic and clinical credentials of the Department of Internal Medicine was one of the major accomplishments of his remarkable career. It was an achievement for which the Department, University, and State can be grateful and justifiably proud.

**DR. FLOYD DENNY:**

When Hal Fallon asked me to talk at this dedication and to address myself to the subject of Lou Welt's contributions to the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, I accepted with both pleasure and reluctance. I was pleased that I was given this opportunity because I have such affection and admiration for Lou and because I believe that he made such great contributions to our medical school. I accepted with reluctance because I was not certain that I could convey adequately to you how important I believe he really was to all of us. It is obvious that there is considerable overlap in what each of the speakers says about Lou, but this should only emphasize his remarkable characteristics.

Lou Welt was an outstanding clinician. My high regard for him in this area was demonstrated by the fact that I consulted him frequently regarding problems in my own patients and in members of my family. Whenever I did this, I was always warmly received, and his answers demonstrated his keen insight, not only into clinical matters involving disease processes, but also into those humane aspects of clinical medicine that are so important to the physician. Lou's abilities as a researcher require no emphasis from me because he was nationally and internationally recognized as a leader in his field. That he was an able administrator was demonstrated by his success in running the Department of Internal Medicine so well when he was its Chairman. In some ways, I believe that Lou Welt was most outstanding as a teacher. Those of you who knew him will recall that his highest accolade for something well done was when he described it as "elegant." In my estimation he was an "elegant" teacher. Lou's interest and fondness for medical students and house staff members led him to spend large amounts of time with them for he always believed that they were his real reason for being. I was always impressed with the warm feelings that were expressed for him by students and house staff.

It is obvious that excellence in all of these areas would make Lou Welt a great departmental chairman. As such, his role at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine was assured. In my estimation, however, he had several other attributes that made him of far more value to the medical school than he would have been as just an excellent departmental chairman.

During Lou's last few years at the University of North Carolina, he developed a keen awareness of the importance of Departments of Internal Medicine participating in the development of primary care physicians and the delivery of health care. I mention this as a special attribute because it is still a rather unusual finding in chairmen of Departments of Medicine. Lou's interest in primary care and delivery
of health care was not shared by all of the members of his department or even believed by some members in our medical school. I have no doubt, however, that his interest was not only sincere but very deep, and I give him credit for much of the quality of our efforts in these areas in the last few years.

Lou Welt's insistence on excellence was his most outstanding characteristic. His intolerance of mediocrity occasionally got him into some trouble because his standards were so high that many could not understand nor meet them. In spite of this, his standards were a guide to all of us in this medical school. Almost of equal importance, in my mind, was Lou's instinct for knowing what was good for the University of North Carolina School of Medicine. I was associated with him from 1960 until the time he left, and I soon learned that he was almost unerring in his ability to choose what was for the overall good of the school.

I believe that Lou Welt combined in abundance those talents as clinician, researcher, teacher, and leader of men with unusual insights in what was necessary to make a great medical school. His insistence on excellence—not only for himself but his fellow workers, his department, his medical school, and his university, made him a truly outstanding man and one whose contributions to all of us will be sorely missed.

DR. PHILIP MANIRE:

On this occasion, when we have come here to honor the memory of Lou Welt and to pay tribute to his many contributions to this University, and especially to this school, you have been reminded by my colleagues of his enormous and tangible accomplishments and contributions during the twenty years he lived and worked among us—times when we knew him as teacher, or task master, or coinvestigator, or fellow scholar, or colleague, or personal friend, or physician, or all of these.

I have been asked to speak for a few minutes about Lou Welt as a man and neighbor and fellow citizen. This is more difficult in two ways. First, because I can do this only by being personal, and this can be most painful in these circumstances. Second, and more important, Lou is a difficult person to portray in true fashion.

He was a very interesting man both to talk with and to characterize. As are all interesting persons I have known, he was a complex man. Some complex people wrap themselves in their complexities like a blanket so they appear to be much simpler people than they are and show only one aspect to the public. This was not true with Lou Welt, and I have always been fascinated by the fact that each of his friends saw him in a slightly different way—and we could not quite agree as to what he was really like. He was a many-faceted man, and each one could apparently see in him a bit of the person that each believed or wished or needed him to be.

So it would be a bit inappropriate and presumptuous for me to represent my own view as being the correct one. I can only comment on Lou as a friend, and, as a friend, the two characteristics that I appreciated most in him were his pride and his humor.

The pride was that of a man who always aspired to, and achieved, the really excellent things in life. From a childhood in New Jersey, as an undergraduate at New York University, through the Yale Medical School, a soldier for four years in World War II, in private practice, and throughout his distinguished academic career he proved himself able to achieve preeminence in the art, science, and politics of medicine. He loved fine things—books, clothing, automobiles, environment.

But as different friends related to him in different ways, our friendship was one of
humor, for Lou could be very humorous. Sometimes his humor was whimsical, sometimes subtle, sometimes outrageous. He took pride and much pleasure in the good humor in his family life and especially the marvelous light spirits of his two sons.

Some years ago, in defense of boredom and nonsmoking at committee meetings, I was saved by the advent of felt-tip pens and doodle pads. At first, Lou teased me about this hobby, but his fascination grew and he soon vied with me to the extent that he would occasionally come to meetings with ruler, protractor, and sharpened pencils and distract us all with complicated designs. He once received as a gift a complicated machine in which a pendulum makes geometric designs on large drawing paper. We spent some time in laughter wondering what effect his bringing that to the next advisory committee meeting would have. It is characteristic of Lou, however, that he did not stop with committee doodles but began a semiserious and quite productive hobby of painting, and it was again characteristic that his paintings were all what the artist calls "hard-edged."

He received many honors in his life that he was hesitant to comment on, but when his "hard-edged" doodle was printed on the cover of the last faculty directory, he pointed out this fact to me more than an adequate number of times.

So as we honor Lou Welt for his scientific and academic achievements, it is appropriate also that we remember him as a man of a many-faceted character that included humor, pride, sentiment, kindness, and appreciation as well as ambition, diligence, and drive.

DR. MORRIS LIPTON:

Wealthy men leave legacies to institutions and causes in which they deeply believe. The unique currency by which academicians live cannot buy buildings nor endow chairs nor establish foundations. Rather, their legacy is measured by the spiritual and intellectual impact on those who have been influenced by them. I am absolutely certain that by his own value system, nothing could have pleased Dr. Welt more than the establishment of a continuing fellowship in his honor by the Department of Medicine. To the extent that it will help to produce men similar to him in commitment and ability, his family and friends will all be delighted. Dr. Ney will address himself to the nature and purposes of the Louis G. Welt Fellowship.

DR. ROBERT NEY:

For those who knew Dr. Welt well, his influence will never be forgotten. Through the people whom he influenced directly, his standard of excellence will be transmitted to a wider circle of students and teachers of medicine. This impact on his colleagues, and on American medicine, is unquestionably a greater tribute than any words or actions we may offer today. It seems appropriate, however, to identify a concrete way in which we may foster the high standards that Dr. Welt brought to this department and this school.

There was no area in which Dr. Welt had a greater impact than in exciting the interest of the younger people around him in research work. He fostered an open, inquiring, and critical approach and a sense of excitement about scientific discovery. If work was shabby or mediocre, he did not hesitate to criticize and demand improvement. The aim was not a happy mediocrity, but a constant ferment that is a part of the restless search for excellence. To nurture these qualities, we believe it is fitting to establish a research fellowship in the Department of Medicine that will bear Dr.
Welt's name. In this way, we hope to encourage young people of the highest intellect to pursue investigative careers in medicine. The fellowship will be awarded on a competitive basis to applicants from institutions throughout this country and other countries as well. In view of Dr. Welt's own scientific interests, we hope especially to nurture the careers of young investigators wishing to work in the areas of nephrology and membrane biology.