VIEWPOINTS

Lessons Learned from an Unsung Hero: Gloria Niemeyer Francke

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When strongly motivated individuals band themselves together for the purpose of achieving worthwhile objectives, they succeed almost in direct proportion to the qualifications of their selected leaders.

-AJHP v17 1960 tribute to GNF

Dennis B. Worthen, Lloyd Scholar at the Lloyd Library and Museum in Cincinnati, OH, has done our profession a service of great importance by initiating the series published in the *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association*, "Heroes of Pharmacy." The first 28 profiles of pharmacy's early heroes have also been compiled in a book by the same title published by the American Pharmacists Association (APhA).

A hero, according to Worthen's definition, is an individual "who sacrifices his or her self-interests to make the profession more than it had been. It is the person who is willing to champion change and advancement in both the clash of opposition and the yawn of disinterest." He continues that "a professional hero is a positive role model. Heroes stick to principles in spite of the pressure to be expedient. Heroes have a vision of what the profession needs to be and the courage and conviction to make it be."

Pharmacy lost another hero on August 3, 2008, when Gloria Niemeyer Francke quietly ended her battle with cancer. Unlike 27 of the 28 heroes remembered in the APhA compilation, this hero was female. But just like those that had been named before her, many of her accomplishments were "firsts." Gloria Niemeyer Francke was the first professional secretary of what would become the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists. Gloria Niemeyer Francke was the first female Remington Medalist and therefore the first woman to receive both the ASHP Harvey AK Whitney Award and the Remington Honor Medal from APhA. She was the first woman to have her name associated with a national pharmacy award. Appropriately it is named the Gloria Niemeyer Francke Leadership Mentor Award, and she lived to see it presented to 14 outstanding individuals who meet the criteria of promot-

ing and encouraging pharmacists to attain leadership positions through example as a role model and mentor.

Dr. Francke graduated from pharmacy school in the 1930s when few women studied pharmacy and rose quickly to serve first as an assistant director at a hospital pharmacy and then as a staff member at APhA working for the section of hospital pharmacy. She and her beloved husband Donald Francke joined forces to advance clinical pharmacy education and practice, working to establish a leading doctor of pharmacy degree program as well as a residency training program in Cincinnati in the early 1970s.

Gloria had faced discrimination early in her career and saved the short letter from one leading corporation to which she had applied for employment shortly after graduation. The pharmaceutical company simply stated that they did not hire women! Appreciating the pain of discrimination, it is not surprising to learn that Dr. Francke marched with Dr. Martin Luther King in Selma, AL, in the 1960s.

Gloria wasn't afraid to tackle difficult or sensitive issues and she did so purposefully yet with amazing grace and a fabulous sense of humor. As the number of female pharmacy students and graduates rose quickly in the late 1970s she accepted responsibility to staff the APhA Task Force on Women in Pharmacy. Many in the largely male-dominated profession at the time voiced concern that women would not step up into leadership and management roles traditionally held by men. The APhA report captured the central issues of concern and set forth a series of broad and bold recommendations to insure that pharmacy would not become "a pink collar profession." Gloria remained on the APhA staff long enough to translate many of the recommendations into action and acted as a conscience for the profession's progress on equality for all licensed pharmacists.

Her reach was much broader than across US pharmacy. Dr. Francke actively participated in international pharmacy programming through groups like the International Pharmacy Federation known as FIP. Her vision for advances in hospital pharmacy and for leadership from all pharmacists, especially women, made her an international hero. She traveled alone or accompanied by a friend to

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meetings in Brazil and Beijing, China, until a year before her life on this earth ended this summer.

Her life in pharmacy will continue through her legacy of leadership development that transcends area of practice. Frigyes Karinthy may receive credit for the popular 6 degrees of separation concept in pop culture and network theory, though Gloria was well aware of how her life was affected by hundreds of scholars, teachers, and mentors. Her Remington Medal Award lecture listed by name the 7 Remington medalists she worked with, beginning with Glenn Jenkins, her Dean at Purdue who wished a new era in pharmacy characterized by excellence in professional practice, teaching, and research. It is notable that Rebecca Snead, the

last Francke Award recipient before Gloria's death, identifies the first Francke Medalist among her mentors and shares mentoring relationships with the authors as well.

The courageous principles and bold vision found in Gloria's life of personal sacrifice for the betterment of pharmacy have never been more important as pharmacy seeks new leadership, advocates, and educators amid economic uncertainty and competing proposals for health care reform. Wherever difficult and sensitive issues in medication use are debated around our small, flat world, here's hoping they are debated by pharmacists connected by and committed to the lessons learned from an unsung hero: Gloria Neimeyer Francke.