Editorial

With Personal and Professional Gratitude: An Editor's Thank You to J. Willis Hurst

By C. Richard Conti, MD, MACC, Editor-in-Chief

This editorial is about a friend who I met years ago when I had to debate him at an American College of Cardiology (ACC) meeting, and we have known and respected each other ever since. As always, he was a gentleman in that debate, and he has remained so for as long as I have known him. Education of his colleagues, teaching of medical students, residents, and fellows-in-training has been J. Willis Hurst's lifelong passion, and he will continue to do that until January 1st, 2009, when he retires from Emory University.

Supplementary material for Silverman M. 2007. J. Willis Hurst - A Man of Achievement. *Clin Cardiol* 20:584–586 can be found online at www.clinical-cardiology.com, in this issue.

In a letter written to me, Willis said, "I regret leaving Emory and *Clinical Cardiology* but as the saying goes—there comes a time." This editorial is written to let our readers know that Dr. J. Willis Hurst is not only retiring from Emory, but also from serving as a co-editor of *Clinical Cardiology*. However, even after retirement, I suspect we will not have heard the last from Willis in terms of his take on the cardiovascular scene. When Willis speaks, I and others will always listen.

In a recent communication we had about his retirement from *Clinical Cardiology*, he commented that I taught him a great deal over the years. Willis, you have it wrong. It was you who taught me over the years! When I was asked to become Editor-in-Chief of *Clinical Cardiology*, the then-publisher Tony Bourgholtzer, told me that Willis thought I might be a good candidate for that task, and for that and many other reasons, I am forever in his debt.

Willis joined the editorial board of *Clinical Cardiology* in 1978 and has served as a co-editor since 1983. When I became Editor-in-Chief of the journal in 1988, I learned very quickly that Willis Hurst was a major contributor, and that it was his idea, and his idea alone, that stimulated the development of the section of the journal entitled "Profiles in Cardiology." In the early days of *Clinical Cardiology*, Willis conceived the idea that perhaps the journal could contribute something unique to cardiovascular literature. He initiated the "Profiles in Cardiology" series that began in 1985, and will hopefully continue as a feature in the journal, either in print or online. Willis served as editor of this section of the journal and subsequently partnered

with W. Bruce Fye, MD, MA, to write, solicit, and edit the monthly submissions. He also served as editor of all "Review articles" submitted to the journal, shouldering the responsibility of soliciting "Review" articles from our mutual friends in academic cardiology. In addition to this work, he has made many personal contributions to the journal by writing articles focused on electrocardiography.

In 2002, Willis had the idea that perhaps we should publish a book entitled, *Profiles in Cardiology*.¹ He suggested that Fye should be a co-author since he was a major contributor to the series in this journal, and noting my enthusiasm for the project, invited me to be a co-editor—of course I was happy to accept. *Profiles in Cardiology*, was published in 2003 and has been a great success and a wonderful contribution to the history of cardiovascular medicine. *Clinical Cardiology* featured a profile about Willis written by Mark Silverman entitled, "J. Willis Hurst—A Man of Achievement,"² which highlights the professional achievements of Willis's career spanning more than 50 y: past president of The American Heart Association, personal physician to President Lyndon Johnson, author of more than 400 articles and essays, editor/author of more than 69 books, and editorial board member for 21 journals. It will be difficult to replace "a man of achievement" with someone who has the same broad vision of cardiovascular science and medicine, and a perspective on the history from whence we came and to where we may be going.

However, a man is more than the sum of his accomplishments. Willis Hurst is a humanist and has the incredible

ability to make people feel good. He certainly made me feel good about serving as editor of this journal, and was always supportive of all of our efforts to improve it. He always had great, new ideas and published several of his own ideas as "Special Articles."

I don't know how many of you know this, but Willis Hurst arises every day at 4:00 am, which is when he initiates his thinking and writing. Obviously getting up early in the morning never hurt Willis since his thoughts and writings have attained legendary importance. His son, J. Willis Hurst, Jr., MD (also a cardiologist) wrote a chapter about his legendary 4:00 am wake up calls in the book, *J. Willis Hurst: His Life and Teachings*.³ Incidentally, it is said that behind every great man there is a great woman, and Willis's wife Nelie was that woman. Willis made that very clear in a work of fiction entitled, *The Last Leaf Has Fallen*,⁴ that describes the love affair between 2 fictional characters, Dr. Vance Connelly (Willis) and his wife Jennifer (Nellie).

I am hoping to spend a few hours with Willis this month reminiscing about the journal and listening to his advice about things that really matter relating to its future.

I recognize that "there comes a time," but nonetheless, to say that I am saddened about his leaving the journal

is an understatement. I am forever in his debt for his support and leadership, and I will personally miss him very much.

Along with my co-editors, A. John Camm, W. Bruce Fye, Attilio Maseri, Magdi Yacoub, I wish Willis the very best. We all will miss him personally, and the journal will certainly miss a major contributor, a counselor, and a visionary about our cardiovascular specialty.

We, the editors, thank you for your myriad past contributions and will continue to seek your advice in the future.

References

1. Hurst JW, Conti CR, Fye WB (Eds.): *Profiles in Cardiology*. The Foundation for Advances in Medicine and Science. FAMS, Inc., Mahwah, NJ; 2003
2. Silverman M. 2007. J. Willis Hurst—A Man of Achievement. *Clin Cardiol* 20:584–586
3. Silverman ME, Fye WB (Eds.): *J. Willis Hurst: His Life and Teachings*. The Foundation for Advances in Medicine and Science (FAMS), Inc., Mahwah, NJ; 2007; 175
4. Hurst JW: *The Last Leaf Has Fallen*. XLibris Corporation, Philadelphia, PA; 2007