IN MEMORIAM

Tribute to Dr. George V. Taplin

On September 19, 1979, at the age of 69, George V. Taplin, M.D., 17th President of the Society of Nuclear Medicine, died of a hepatoma after a brief illness. He leaves behind a cornerstone of scientific achievement upon which the specialty of nuclear medicine is built. The early clinical activities in nuclear medicine could be designated as "thyroid work" and "Taplin's work." In 1955, Dr. Taplin—Tappy to all who knew him—initiated his contributions with the iodine-131 rose bengal uptake/excretion test for liver function and within a year he had developed the prototype radionuclide renogram. In those days, the Taplin renogram and hepatogram along with conventional thyroid studies provided the basic workload of the few nuclear medicine laboratories in existence. As commercial rectilinear scanners became available in the late 50's, Tappy's I-131 rose bengal became widely used as a liver-scanning agent.

As a natural spin-off from his early studies of the treatment of pneumococcal pneumonia with micropulverized penicillin, he became interested in radioactive particles as imaging agents. In 1963, at the Society of Nuclear Medicine meeting in Montreal, Tappy and his colleagues presented a scientific exhibit describing radio-albumin aggregates for organ scanning. Although he was principally interested in microaggregates for imaging liver and spleen, in the course of discussion of one of his presentations, he also mentioned that larger aggregates could be produced that would provide perfusion lung images. Following this radiopharmaceutical milestone, he next developed radio-inhalation aerosol imaging and in the ensuing years spent a significant amount of time refining the technique. He extended his interest in pulmonary problems to patients with a variety of pathologic conditions, and made several important comparative studies in obstructive airways disease. His creative prowess spanned the continuum from particles to positrons.

Perhaps the easiest way to point out the magnitude of Tappy's impact on our specialty is to recognize that his fundamental contributions in renal, hepatobiliary, hepatic, and perfusion lung imaging alone, account for ONE QUARTER of the millions of patient examinations performed annually in this country.

Another measure of his scientific impact can be gleaned from the Society of Nuclear Medicine Annual Meeting. Tappy first became interested in the SNM in 1957 when he presented an exhibit. In the ensuing TWENTY-TWO YEARS, his group was always represented on our society's scientific program. At the last meeting, Atlanta, 1979, George V. Taplin—then Professor Emeritus at the University of California at Los Angeles—personally presented the paper, "Smaller Lung Particles for Safer Perfusion Examinations."

Tappy's achievements were recognized by his colleagues, friends, and peers. For example, he received the Distinguished Scientist Award from the Northern and Southern California Chapters of the Society of Nuclear Medicine in 1973, was named California Scientist of the Year in 1976, and was cited by the Society of Nuclear Medicine as its Nuclear Medicine Pioneer in 1975. Tappy was also a successful administrator, and our Society prospered during the year he was president. In his academic capacity at UCLA, Tappy was Chief of the Nuclear Medicine Division of the Laboratory of Nuclear

Medicine and Radiation Biology from 1958 until he became Professor Emeritus in 1977. In his latter years he was also Associate Director of this prestigious laboratory.

It is easy to cite the accomplishments that George V. Taplin leaves. It is more difficult to capture Tappy, the man. He had a unique quality about him comprised of many facets. He was very quick to acknowledge the work of his younger collaborators. He was clearly proud of them and invariably cited their efforts in all of his formal presentations. He was absolutely honest, and on those few occasions when needed, could openly admit that he had made a mistake. He was continually enthusiastic about his work and seemed as delighted at the success of others in nuclear medicine as he was by his own efforts. His scientific presentations were virtually always effective in spite of the fact that Tappy, by his own admission, was not a great public speaker. In a husky voice, virtually inaudible beyond the first row without electronic amplification, he always managed to keep the attention of the audience. In fact, one soon learned that if you did not give Tappy your undivided attention, you would miss a unique idea. Personally, I heard him lecture dozens of times—on everything from refresher courses to works-in-progress—and always learned something. Finally, there was the "Taplin enthusiasm" and the "Taplin spirit." He loved nuclear medicine, and he loved scientific progress.

These traits made him widely admired and widely respected, not only by his colleagues in nuclear medicine but by many in other disciplines. For example, Tappy was a member of the Fleischner Society, a group wherein the nuclear medicine members form but a small minority. Nevertheless, he was named to give the prestigious Fleischner Lecture for 1980. Although it is sad that he did not live to fulfill this goal, it is, at the same time, indicative of his constant and persistent talent that he still had tasks ahead to be accomplished. It is characteristic that he worked in his laboratory to within ten days of his death.

Tappy is survived by two children and his wife Lucile, Tappy's constant companion at the many scientific meetings he attended. If to share grief is in some way to ease it, then we wish them to know that their grief is shared by us. None privileged to know Tappy will ever forget him. The principles he embodied—integrity, love, and respect for his colleagues and his specialty, enthusiasm for progress, and consummate creativity—will endure forever. He was a beloved man, and we shall miss him deeply.

ALEXANDER GOTTSCHALK
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut