

Fan Mail to John

July 18, 1939 From City of Los Angeles Fire Department

Dear Doctor:

While an emergency appendectomy during a pleasure trip can hardly be considered fortunate, still factors may enter into this experience which temper the misfortune very materially. I have several reasons to be gratified as a result of professional contact with you.

I will never forget the sense of complete loss and defenselessness I experienced on the night of June 28th when, a complete stranger, I was obliged to find a doctor for my youngster. Believe me, it was with much misgiving that I asked you to visit that auto park in Seaside in the middle of the night. I could call up any number of reasons why you might find it inconvenient to come. I had nothing but the word of a waitress in a restaurant as to your personal competence. Altogether it was bad hour.

The fact that I hear of your fine reputation now as a surgeon only confirms my own conclusion, now that the experience is over. I think that your actions in assisting us in our dilemma in the early morning hours of June 29th – responding to the assistance of some unknown party housed in an auto camp outside of town – taking kindly personal interest – assuming some personal risk no doubt, these actions are worthy of the finest traditions of your great profession. My father and grandfather were country doctors and I remember much of my father's self-sacrifice. Perhaps the strain in the blood is showing in my daughter, who wants to be a veterinary surgeon.

And before I forget it, let me report that the young man is doing all right, we are trying to hold him down. He is doing much better than my police dog. In our absence he was run over by a car and suffered a badly fractured leg. He was taken to a veterinary in Van Nuys. Some ten days later we got the dog, let poorly set, suffering from distemper, and now we don't know whether he will pull through or not. Some service, that!

Repeating my appreciation, Doctor, I am Cordially yours, Frank Shirley

August 3, 1945

Dear Sir,

Words really cannot express my appreciation for what you have done for me by performing the operation on little Derry Lan without charges.

This love and kindness has cheered my heart so greatly and I'm sure other members of my family say the same. I only wish I could express my exact thoughts but I know you realize that you have been simply wonderful to me and my little son.

A million thanks to you! Sincerely, Caryl Westerberg

January 15, 1948

Dear Dr. Gratiot,

Will you please give our nurse my address so that she can send a statement? We surely appreciated your gracious services the other evening when you picked my new "excavation." The bleeding stopped at once and I've had no more trouble.

Could I implore you to take on the care of the Budd clan? We are newly here from Hawaii and need a family doctor whom we can like and trust. Our few contacts here with doctors have not given us that confidence we need --- and then I met you. Immediately I felt relaxed and reassured. Busy as you were you "had time" to help us out. What a nice feeling --- since leaving Hawaii and the family doctor" we've been at sea for proper medical help. No wonder the Bolins (and probably all of your patients) adore you.

Could you possibly squeeze in four Budds? We'll promise to be good patients. We'll even stand in line waiting for our turn to be your charges.

By the way, I thought perhaps you'd be interested in the Bolin letter. Will you save it for me or mail it back?

Sincerely Mrs. Paul Budd

November 2, 1948

M.W. Crowley, Realtor, Pacific Grove

Dear Dr. John:

I hand you herewith my check for \$500 in payment for Mrs. Crowley's operation. Dr. John, I want to tell you that I have never in my life signed a check with a feeling of gratitude in my heart that I have for you when I have signed this one. I want you to know that I believe of everything I have ever had done in my life for myself or anyone dear to me or connected with me I appreciate what you did for Mrs. Crowley more than anything else that has ever happened to me.

Again, thank you, I am

Sincerely yours, Mike Crowley

May 7, 1949 (from Aunt Carol Rhodes Sibley in Berkeley)

John dear,

I shall always believe that I was specially and providentially taken care of when it turned out that you took care of me just a month ago today! For I have surely joined that ever growing multitude of grateful patients who thank God for your skill, your generosity and your wonderful sense of "physicianship" in all the finest meaning that can be read into that word. I've always thought you were a pretty swell person and a most delightful brother – but now the third dimension enters in and I pay first hand tribute to you

as a master surgeon and a great hearted friend. I think there is no profession higher than yours and the way you demonstrate its possibilities for good is a joy to your friends and a lasting tribute to your own character.

In addition to which – it was fun being with you and I feel closer and more than ever grateful to the whole Gratiot tribe – than whom there are no grander bunch!

With my very real appreciation and affection, Carol

June 30, 1949

Dear Dr. John,

Just a very small gift of sincere appreciation for being so wonderful to me. Your real human understanding, quiet bedside manner, your smiling eyes, and that hand of experience mad it so easy for me to get well. I shall always remember you as the perfect doctor.

This is not the album of records I have been waiting all this time to give you, but it will arrive one day for you. It is Mozart Concerto No. 21 – Schnell

Sincerely, Ann

July 2, 1949

Piano tuning, etc. June 24 and 27

My dear Doctor: The above account is cancelled on my books in grateful appreciation of having survived the removal of the miniature barbed-wire staples while under your dexterous, wire-pulling manipulation.

Cordially, George Eaidley, Piano tuner

October 3, 1949

From Nicholas Roosevelt, Big Sur, California

Dear john:

In our search for air we were sidetracked before finishing talking about that check.

I hope that you did not get the impression that we are unappreciative of the spirit which prompted you in returning it. The point which I was trying t o make is that we both feel strongly that when we go to you or anyone else for professional care we do so on the same basis as would any other person in need of professional attention. In so doing we are taking advantage of the years of study and experience of

the professional man, and to the extent that we make demands on his time as well as on his knowledge and experience, we are imposing on him if he does not permit us to make just compensation for what he does.

Here is the nub of the matter: We should like to be able to continue to feel that, in the event of need, we can turn to you for professional attention. This means continued (though we hope only infrequent and brief) demands on your time and skill. We would not feel justified in coming to you unless we are treated on the same basis as other patients.

You were kind enough to say something to the effect that you felt that you were compensated by the good times which you had had with us. That, also, we greatly appreciate, but our welcome to ur friends and the enjoyment which their presence brings us can never have anything to do with business matters.

We loved having you both here, and are only sorry that your visit was cut off at both ends. I see that one of our problems will have to be to provide the Gratiots with adequate home supervisory facilities so that they can stay away longer.

Always yours, Nick

P.S. I wonder if Ruth would be good enough to check with the mail re the tickets we had tried to get for tomorrow night. I canceled same. T.

June 4th, 1951

Dear Doctor Gratiot:

It seems impossible for me to place a cheque in a cold envelope, without expressing my deep gratitude to you.

Just to pay my bill seems so inadequate – for never could there be price high enough to reward yo for renewed health and happiness.

I have never had such care, or the service of one so highly skilled as yourself. I wish it were easier to convey to you all that is within me. Never shall I forget your immeasurable kindnesses to me and please accept my most sincere and lasting gratitude.

Very Truly yours, Nellie Fay (?)

Sept. 3, 1951 – from Carmel - by-the-Sea, California

Dear Dr. John"

I'm ashamed I haven't written you sooner to tell you how terribly grateful I am for all you did for both Larry and me.

Only through your kindness and generous help was it possible for Larry to remain at the wonderful Peninsula community hospital.

I'm in a position now to return the money you so generously gave from the special fund, so you may help some other unfortunate person.

I consider it an honor to have known you, Dr. John.

Very sincerely,

Loretta Mulry

January 12, 1954 from Rev. Bernard Lovgren, St. John's Chapel

Dear Dr. Gratiot –

Your note came as a blow to me for I had planned to ask you to serve as Senior Warden of St. John's next year. I realize, of course, that a busy surgeon can't give as much time to outside interest as he might wish. Yet I had hoped that I could have you as my "right hand" man to call upon you for advice and consent on matters affecting the Parish and its welfare. There is no one who has the confidence and respect of the congregation more than you have and your absence from the services and Vestry meetings is quite understandable. The big consideration is that we do have your interest and the loyalty and full cooperation and support of you and your family. You have been very far from being "dead wood" for I know you have given St. John's all the thought and effort you would. No one can do more. Giving is no more time than you have been able to this past year I would still consider it a personal privilege to have you as my Senior Warden. I know it would mean much to the future of St. John's.

I am not going to put you in an embarrassing position. But I did want you to know how I felt about you in relation to the Chapel and the Senior lay office. If after thinking over this new development, you still feel as though you should not accept, I shall accede to your desire with profound gratitude for all you have meant to me personally as a member of the Vestry knowing that St. John's will continue to have your continued support and interest. If there is a possibility that you might reconsider, I should like to talk the matter over with you. Now, don't let this worry you at all. I know you will answer conscientiously and I shall accept your decision with the same spirit.

Thank you for your comment of congratulation.

Faithfully yours,

Bernard N. Lovgren

Probably late 1954

Dear Doctor Gratiot –

Ever since you have so generously shared with me those priceless things – your time, compassion and skill, I have wished that I had something unique in talent or possession that I might share with you. Alas, my precious things are only priceless to me! I can't even create a decent pie!

"Thorn" and I were talking about it and remembered some old Chinese bowls which were brought to us before we left China (and while Old China was falling to pieces about the old families) by a dear Chinese friend in whose family they had belonged. I do not know if they are truly ancient eggshell porcelain, but Chinese friends have often admired them.

Not long ago a Chinese gentleman visiting Monterey (whom we had never known before) had tea with us and had occasion to admire these particular bowls. In the course of the conversation he spoke of his friend, Woo Tsho Ts. "Woo Tsho Ts" we shouted – he is the one who gave us the bowls. So, for a long time we looked westward across the Pacific, in the sunset, talking of Woo Tho Ts and wishing we could know how he is faring in the new harsh China.

It is horribly impolite in the orient to not give a pair of anything, so I expect he would approve, but Thorn and I agreed that your lovely old character – with-the-red-chopsticks needs one of Woo Tsho Ts' bowls.

Wishing you a full rice bowl in 1955

Gratefully, Helen Thorngate

NOTE: Her husband was another doctor in Monterey. The "lovely old character" was a painting hanging in Dad's office behind his desk for years.

September 28, 1955 Bakersfield, California

Dear Dr. Gratiot,

Just a note to inform you that I am continuing along the road to recovery, but that the journey's end is not in sight as yet. This recuperative process appears to be a logarithmic type of function in that the noticeable improvement per unit of time continually decreases. At long last I have returned to work for an hour or two every day, and by another week or two I should be able to put in a full half-day.

I am certainly envious of your reputation among your colleague. The first thing our family doctor stated was how fortunate I was to have a surgeon of your caliber. Perhaps the greatest honor a professional man could receive is the respect and admiration of his own colleagues.

We hope you had an enjoyable trip, and will always be grateful for your skillful remedial work on me.

Sincerely, Roy – Einar L. Johnson

1958

Dear Doctor John,

I am extending my heartfelt Easter Greetings to you – through this enclosed verse. I thought of you, particularly in the second and third paragraphs for I know you must place your hand into the "hand of

God,” before you give of yourself to humanity – for it must be, indeed, “Going out into darkness,” when performing surgery – for, how is one to know what one will find...? And, to begin, and to complete your great work – I am sure that your heart prays “To give you the light, so that you may tread safely into the unknown...”

Respectfully and Sincerely,

Annette. H. Lucido

In an illustrated card with this message by M. Louis Haskins: I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: Give me light that I may tread safely into the unknown. And he replied: Go out into the darkness and put thine hand into the hand of God. That shall be to thee—better than light and safer than a known way.

June 27, 1959 from 1670 Spruce St., Berkeley

Dear Dr. Gratiot,

I must tell you of the feeling in my mind and heart as you came toward me in your office last Monday afternoon.

In the serenity of your face and manner I know that our Lord walks with you and guides you every day.

This meeting with you will remain with me as a happy one as long as I live,

Sincerely yours,

Joseph McKeown

June 4, 1962 From S.F.B Morse, Pebble Beach, California

Dear John:

It was very thoughtful of you to write Maurine and myself as you did. What we have contributed to the hospital was done with real pleasure on our part. It is a privilege to have an important part in constructing something like that.

It is because of our faith in men like you that we feel about it as we do. You have always done a wonderful and unselfish job and we are very grateful that you are here.

Sincerely,

Sam

With a note from Maurine Morse

Dear John,

Thank you very much for your kindness to me – I've never heard of such a wonderful operation. We went out to Cypress for a few holes of golf today and I played better than I have in ages. Sam said that he thought I should have surgery at least once a month!

Again my thanks and best wishes to you and Ruth.

Sincerely,

Maurine Morse

Undated letters

Tuesday

Dear Doctor Gratiot,

I have been spending the day writing thank you notes for the many flowers and good wishes sent me last week.

Now I think the most important person to express appreciation to is you who did so much for me in so many ways.

Dear Doctor John I hope you know how much more you give your patients over and above your remarkable skill. One has such a feeling of security in your hands and in your understanding.

You work so hard and give so much I feel you should at least know what you mean to so many people. So at the risk of seeming presumptuous or a dripping sentimentalist I am trying to tell you. Probably others have been able to express it better, I hope.

I don't know how I can repay what you have done for me except to try to pass your kindness on and will endeavor to do so.

Sincerely,

Ruth Dennis

March 31st, Berkeley

My dear Dr. John,

Both Col. Hansen and I want to tell you again how much we appreciate all you did for me. Though after my many operations I can't honestly call any "pleasant," this was the least unpleasant of any. I fully realize that I'm not the easiest person to care for as I do anticipate the worst. But that's because in the past something has always gone wrong which made my recuperation tedious, to say the least. My rapid and uneventful convalescence this time has surprised and delighted us. It is never easy to put yourself completely in the hands of someone else which you have to do in an operation, but we feel that I couldn't have been in safer or more expert hands or kinder ones than yours.

I shan't say "good-bye" because we love California and hate to leave and we'll find some excuse to come back one day.

Sincerely yours,
Eloise W. Hansen

Tuesday morning

Dear Dr. John,

One of the things for which I am particularly thankful this week, is the thorough and loving care with which you treated my mother las Spring. Of course, I have been grateful all these months but I've waited until Thanksgiving to say so! As an extension and continuation of your kindness I have sent a few CARE packages, so that others in the world will be able to be thankful for food.

Sincerely, "Tneet" Thorngate *(not sure of the nickname!)*

Carmel

Dear Dr. Gratiot:

Ever time I have seen you there have been some questions, small anxieties, seeming "trifle" to ask you, but I don't believe I have ever expressed my deep gratitude for your care during the past months.

Often in coming for a check-up I have felt an imposter for there were so many people needing your attention, and I have felt sorry for these tremendous demands on your time and energy. But after a ten-minute conference, I have left reassured of your interest in each individual case. You have that rare ability to soothe and seem unhurried with each individual, and to inspire confidence.

Now that we have come through the operation so easily, and have a healthy baby Boy (which we ordered!) – I and my family are especially grateful again for your skill and care.

I would like to add my name to that long list of patients who affectionately refer to you as "Dr. John"!

Sincerely, Mrs. Glen Watson

Me too, Glen W. Watson

July the tenth – from Miss Lucy Neely McLane, 210 Locust Street, Pacific Grove, CA 93950

Ruth and John, -- To spend an evening and enjoy a delicious dinner with friends who have something to say, is, in itself stimulating; and that is the reaction I felt yesterday after being a part for the nonce of the Gratiot family.

I thoroughly enjoyed you three – YOU, the "homey" home, the books, the pictures, -- not forgetting the artistically arranged good food, -- and , yea, the dogs, DID something to make me feel that, perhaps I CAN still contribute a bit toward trying, as you so earnestly do, to make this sort of upside down world a better place in which to live.

I DO THANK YOU, Affectionately, Lucy

Kirsten Marie Jensen, 601 Folsom Chehalis, Wash [obviously an immigrant from Scandinavia]

Dockter Gratiot.

Dear Sere, I am paying the bill as fast as I can. I soire it haftto tak so long. Thes Tim I can pay a little more. I shall always love and respekt you is a greath blessing to humanety and you ware so very good to me. Your old patient,

Mrs. K M Jensen

Karen is in Los Engeles had sicknes in her own Famaly.

Letter from Carl Hedberg to Ruth on the occasion of John's death, September, 1975

Saturday

Dear Ruth,

Our thoughts have been with you these sad days. Words seem so futile in expressing our feelings in the passing of dear John. Certainly, the fine tributes accorded him at the Memorial Service is a credit to his outstanding ability and prestige in the community. He was one of the finest persons we have ever known and we shall always cherish his memory.

We know that your stamina will carry you through this difficult period and time will ease the burden. You will be consoled by your many happy memoires of your life together.

Your religious faith and family will offer you untold comfort.

We wish we could personally be with you. We shall contribute to the Memorial Fund here and in Monterey.

With our love and sympathy,

Hazel and Carl