

2003

Eulogy: Dr. Theodore L. Biddle

Roger J. Miner '56

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/memorials_eulogies



Part of the [Judges Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Miner '56, Roger J., "Eulogy: Dr. Theodore L. Biddle" (2003). *Memorials and Eulogies*. 14.
http://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/memorials_eulogies/14

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Speeches and Writings at DigitalCommons@NYLS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Memorials and Eulogies by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@NYLS.

Eulogy
Dr. Theodore L. Biddle
First Church In Albany
Monday, June 9, 2003
1:00 P.M.

Ted Biddle was a man who was easy to love. Modest, unassuming, self-effacing, he inspired deep affection, respect and admiration in all whose lives he touched. I first came to know him as a compassionate, caring physician and then was privileged to know him as a loyal and valued friend. Over the years, he attended me during three separate hospitalizations in connection with three different life-threatening situations. I actually owe my life to him. On one of those occasions, I was not even admitted on his service, but he came in as soon as my wife called. We both decided that it would be best if he took over from the Resident on duty. He made the necessary adjustments, and my deteriorating condition immediately began to improve. When I praised him for his work, he called it a "no-brainer." I do not know what that says about the Resident.

It was to my great benefit that his towering talent as a cardiologist was suffused with his understanding of the whole person, the whole body. He was an unusual man and an unusual physician. I have never known anybody like him and know that I shall never see his like again. It was a pleasure to see him working his magic in his white lab coat, especially when he was working his magic on me. "I will try to help," he often said, because helping was his life's work, his devotion, his commitment.

During my lengthy hospitalizations, I got to know him well, and so did my wife Jackie, whose many inquiries he answered with great patience, understanding and sympathy. He became her physician and her friend as well. It almost seems that he never left my side when I was in the hospital because he was with me so frequently. When I was in extremis, he was there at night, on weekends, whenever. He stayed there some nights when there was nothing to do for me, just to comfort Jackie. He evidently did not believe in the shift work of modern medicine, the concept that all the members of a practice are fungible. I well remember that he was with me on one weekend afternoon when he was supposed to be off duty but came to the hospital to see me anyway. He asked if I could briefly excuse him so that he could see his son participate in a track meet. What an amazing physician! What a special friend! What an exceptional person! To be his patient was to have the very best and kindest care. To be his friend was to have the world.

Ted had a great sense of humor. He noticed that Jackie regularly brought me food to eat in the hospital, and he pointed out an entry in the chart made by one of the nurses. It said: "Patient eats ethnic food -- eats lox" -- spelled l-o-c-k-s. I guess you would need a strong jaw to eat that. Ted eventually joined me as a happy consumer of Jackie's ethnic cooking. On another occasion, I mentioned to him that my hospitalization caused me to miss my pre-prandial Scotch on the Rocks. Shortly after I shared this problem with him, the nurse advised that he

had written a prescription for Scotch in my chart. She said she did not know how to provide this medication because there was none in the pharmacy. I assured her that she need not worry. Sometimes it is not good to take things too literally.

I later learned that he too had a taste for the same sort of spirits that I enjoy, and we spent many happy hours at my home and his and at various restaurants consuming the same with our meals, in moderation of course. At one of our recent dinners with our wives at a local restaurant, Ted and I loudly denounced the management for not having our favorite product in stock. Jackie and Geri told us not to make a scene, but we were highly incensed and did carry on to some extent. Our very last dinner with Geri and Ted was at a fully supplied restaurant in Florida. Geri's wonderful parents were present and we therefore were not quite as rowdy. We had such good times when the four of us got together! We discussed every topic under the sun, and Ted always was interested in the issues facing my court. I was interested in his work as well, but he mostly liked to talk about his students.

He enjoyed teaching very much and frequently praised the intelligence and dedication of the young men and women who would enter his profession. When he brought some of these students around to my bedside, I would lecture them at length, all to Ted's great amusement. My favorite question to them was: "What is the most important instrument used by a cardiologist?" "The answer," I told them, "is the human ear." Ted would nod and

they never knew if we were serious in our banter. On one occasion, I told Ted that I was having a bad reaction to a certain medication. He told me that he would keep experimenting until he found the right one for me. "That," he said, "is what we call scientific method." "If that is scientific method," I said, "then the law is more scientific than medicine." He laughed at that but of course rejected the premise entirely.

Ted was a courtly gentleman of the old school. His was a dignity that came of self-knowledge, of caring, of helping, of compassion and concern. He had many interests and, to my mind, fit the definition of "Renaissance Man." He very much enjoyed the outdoors and working in his garden and saving plants. My wife often said that he was devoted to saving lives of all kinds. He enjoyed traveling far and wide with Geri and he enjoyed skiing and his time in Colorado and at the lake and his many other interests.

But first and foremost for me he was the template, the quintessential physician as well as a man for all seasons. He has left us, but he will always be with us, in our hearts and in our minds and in our memories. All of us who loved him greatly -- Geri, the children, grandchildren and entire family, the patients, the colleagues, the students and the friends -- will miss him greatly. We are many in number, because Ted Biddle was a man who was easy to love.