

In Memoriam: Carl C. Pfeiffer, B.A., Ph.D., M.D.

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Dr. Carl C. Pfeiffer will be remembered by thousands of patients and their families, by hundreds of thousands of his readers, by colleagues from medicine, biochemistry and psychology, and by all his colleagues, with whom he worked to develop the new rational psychiatry and medicine known as Orthomolecular medicine.

I first met Carl in the mid-fifties at a meeting in Princeton called to share all our experiences and research findings arising from our interest in d-lysergic acid diethylamide, the best studied hallucinogenic ergot derivative. He was Chairman of Pharmacology, Emory University School

of Medicine, Atlanta, Georgia. A few years later I visited him at Emory. We began to meet more frequently after Dr. Humphry Osmond became Director of the

New Jersey Neuropsychiatric Institute.

Carl was Head of the Neuropharmacology Section, 1960 to 1973. We continued to meet frequently after he left the institute to organize the Princeton Bio Center. We worked together with the American Schizophrenia Association, later with the Huxley Institute for Biosocial Research, both as members of the Board. Dr. Pfeiffer was a superb teacher and he was called to almost all of the annual meetings of the Huxley Institute for Biosocial Research and the Canadian Schizophrenia Foundation. I never left one of his lectures without having learned something I was able to use in helping my patients to recover.

Why should Carl be remembered? The reasons are many. Patients will remember him, for they owe their health and lives to his findings. For many, the hell and terror of schizophrenia has been replaced by the

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good health we all should enjoy. Families will remember how their lives have changed from despair to contentment, from depression, discomfort and enormous stress to hope and serenity. Communities should remember that each patient who recovers from schizophrenia saves them between one and two million dollars over their lifetime. Health administrators should have known they might have saved billions of dollars in health costs had they only been aware of and followed Dr. Pfeiffer's lead. His Orthomolecular colleagues will remember him, for every day they practise they will be using some of his discoveries. Every time I see white areas on my patients' nails, or ask them about stretch marks, I think about Carl's research, about his work with kryptopyrrole, about his classification of the schizophrenias into pyrrolurians, histadelics and histape-nics, about his work with Pyridoxine, zinc, copper, and the toxic heavy metals. The bare bones of Carl's professional career do not show why he was set aside, why he became such an innovative, distinguished Orthomolecular scientist. After winning his Ph.D. in pharmacology in 1935 from the University of Wisconsin, and his M.D. in 1937 from the University of Chicago, he interned and instructed in Pharmacology for two years. Over the next five years he was Professor of Pharmacology, Chief Pharmacologist with Parke Davis & Co., and Lieutenant in the U.S. Naval Reserve at Bethesda. For the next nine years he was Professor and Head of the Department of Pharmacology, University of Illinois College of Medicine. Then he became Chairman of Pharmacology, Emory University, and later Director of Division of Basic Health Sciences. So far he had shown he was a hard working, creative research scientist.

In 1960 his career suddenly took off in an entirely new and unexpected direction. He joined the Neuropsychiatric Institute, New Jersey, as head of the neuropharmacology division. In 1973 he founded the Princeton Bio Center which he directed until his death. His Orthomolecular career began at Princeton. This remarkable change in direction did not endear him to his academic colleagues; it did to all who began to benefit from it.

Why would a scientist so well known, so well established in his field, switch so suddenly to follow a road so full of enmity (from former colleagues)? Sir Thomas Sydenham, considered the father of clinical medicine, wrote that a discovery in medicine is like a sapling growing in the middle of the road it will be destroyed by the galloping hordes unless it is properly fenced in. Carl not only had to plant his ideas in the mainstream of medicine, but also had to build the fences with which to protect them and allow them to grow.

I have thought about this for a long time. I believe scientists like Carl Pfeiffer, Linus Pauling, Humphry Osmond, Emanuel Cheraskin, and many more, are characterized by a divine discontent which sets them apart from other scientists. They can not be happy with what is known, especially when they know this is not enough. They are not content to practise what is merely common; for them, this is inadequate. They remain discontented as long as people suffer from diseases from which there is no relief. But divine discontent is not enough — it must spur activity, but there can be no sustained activity without enduring energy. It takes a lot of energy to do research, to work on new ideas, to see them into print, to face the antagonism and hostility of a profession which usually does not look kindly on its innovators. Carl had this energy which he maintained by keeping physically fit, by eating nutritious food and by taking vitamin and mineral supplements. He practised what he preached. The older he got, the more productive he became. As a measure of his productivity I have examined his complete list of published material, books and papers. An examination of his public lectures to physicians and others would show the same trend.

The following table shows his publications by year, divided into four 13-year periods.

The first two periods represent his establishment career. The last two periods represent his Orthomolecular career. It is clear his productivity continued to increase linearly. Had he lived another thirteen years, he might have added another 150 papers to an already distinguished list. Unlike most scientists who become less