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The Addict and The AMA

James T. Nix, M.D.

In the past, when medicine was the family physician, his devotion and dedication merited the trust that patients placed in his devoted, loving hands. Kindness was his specialty. Specialization has made him the Vanishing Cavalier. In American medicine today, the voice of the AMA is not necessarily that of the "silent majority" of practicing American physicians. Resolutions and opinions expressed at American Medical Association conventions may reflect the opinion of delegates elected by self-perpetuating medical politicians from component medical societies. The American citizen expected that their hard-earned tax dollars dedicated to control of crime on the streets, and curbing heroin addiction, would be allocated prudently to medical grants showing the best promise of cure at the lowest financial cost. Yet, a half billion dollars annually has been given in medical grants by the federal government to non-methadone, non-productive programs, with a 3 percent cure or remission rate, rather than to methadone maintenance programs with a confirmed cure and remission rate of 65 percent. Organized medicine has done little to merit the confidence of the American public and safeguard our citizens against physicians deficient in moral character who might research for financial gain.

At every American Medical Association convention, pious platitudes, labeled as "resolutions", are passed and possibly forgotten before they are printed, to be filed in the limbo of half-forgotten things. At the 1969 American Medical Association convention in New York City, a resolution was passed, guaranteeing every American his basic right to the physician and hospital of his choice. As the narcotic addict is still considered by organized medicine as a criminal, not what he is—a sick American whose illness motivates his crime, he is deprived of his basic health right of freedom of choice, and treatment by government or university physicians is often mandatory. Furthermore, he is seldom courteously treated by any physicians, and physicians in private practice regard him as a hazard to their professional income. It seems that "once an addict, never an American citizen." Parallel to "Alphonse and Gaston", the medical society tells the physician member that whatever the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs says that whatever the Medical Society considers ethical is not a violation of federal law.

Ethics would seem to have geographic boundaries. To the Louisiana
Methadone Clinic is considered one never to be used in mixed company. Yet, when the physician member goes to New York State, the physician is automatically liable to criminal federal treatment by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs — as mentioned previously, the Federal Bureau considers whatever is ethical in the opinion of the Medical Society, the phrase "Methadone Clinic" might be considered one never to be used in mixed company. 

Physician, heal thyself."

A Life Of Commitment

Joseph R. Stanton, M.D., F.A.C.P.*

Father Guildy, Guild members, friends and most warmly of Guild members already called to their eternal reward.

At the instruction of William Cardinal O'Connell, the Guild of St. Luke of Boston was organized and first presided over by Dr. Thomas Dwight, Professor of Anatomy at the Harvard Medical School, author of "Thoughts of a Catholic Anatomist," and a man who once entering a prosecution room where a certain levity was going-on — struck the table forcibly and said, "Gentlemen, silence! This body once contained an immortal soul!"

The story is additionally told of Dr. Dwight that each year in the month of November he would have mass offered in the Cathedral of The Holy Cross for the souls of the bodies that were the subjects for dissection that year. It is undoubtedly from that source of inspiration that some members of this Guild keep a list of all those who die in their care during the year and in November have mass offered for their souls. I suggest to you that this custom and the mass for deceased doctors we offer tonight are part of a noble tradition that is eminently worthy of survival.