

DR. HAMPAR KELIKIAN

1899 - 1983

MR. DOLE. MR. PRESIDENT, "AS YOU GET OLDER," ERNEST HEMINGWAY ONCE WROTE, "IT IS HARDER TO HAVE HEROES, BUT IT IS SORT OF NECESSARY." NOWHERE IS IT MORE NECESSARY THAN HERE IN WASHINGTON, WHERE IT'S SO EASY TO BECOME PREOCCUPIED WITH LAST WEEK'S PRIORITIES AND THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES. HERE, WE CAN FOCUS ON THE TRANSIENT AND OVERLOOK THE ENDURING. WE SPEAK OF "THE PEOPLE" AND DON'T ALWAYS TAKE THE TIME TO RECOGNIZE THOSE REMARKABLE PERSONS WHO BROADEN OUR OUTLOOK AND DEEPEN OUR SYMPATHIES, WHO PUT FLESH ON THE BARÉ BONES OF INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER.

TODAY, I PAUSE TO RECALL SUCH A MAN, A HEALER OF SHATTERED BODIES NAMED HAMPAR KELIKIAN. DR. KELIKIAN EARNED FAME FOR HIS HISTORIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE OPERATING ROOM. HE EARNED THE GRATITUDE OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO, LIKE MYSELF, LIVE A MUCH MORE FULL EXISTENCE BECAUSE OF HIS OPERATIVE SKILLS. HE EARNED THE ADMIRATION OF THOSE WHO KNEW HIM ONLY THROUGH PRESS COVERAGE AS ONE WHO WAS STILL PERFORMING TEN OPERATIONS A WEEK AT THE AGE OF EIGHTY.

NO FEATURE STORY, HOWEVER GENEROUS, COULD FULLY CONVEY THE PERSONAL HEROISM OF HAMPAR KELIKIAN. AS A BOY, HE ESCAPED THE BLOOD-SPATTERED LANDSCAPE OF ARMENIA, WHERE THREE OF HIS SISTERS DIED IN THE SENSELESS VIOLENCE THAT HAS FOR SO LONG MARRED THAT CORNER OF THE GLOBE. HE ARRIVED IN CHICAGO IN 1920, POSSESSING TWO DOLLARS IN HIS POCKET AND A RUG FROM HIS NATIVE LAND. HE WENT TO WORK ON A FARM, WORKING HARD

ENOUGH THAT HIS EMPLOYER HELPED PAY HIS WAY THROUGH COLLEGE IN RETURN. THE YOUNG IMMIGRANT WENT ON TO MEDICAL SCHOOL AND AN APPRENTICESHIP AT COOK COUNTY HOSPITAL.

WHEN WAR AGAIN CAME TO EUROPE IN 1939, DR. KELIKIAN SHARED HIS GENIUS WITH HIS ADOPTED HOMELAND. HE DISCOVERED SURGICAL METHODS PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN, AND HE FOUND WAYS TO RESTORE USE TO OTHERWISE USELESS LIMBS. HARRY TRUMAN GAVE HIM A MEDAL. THOSE WHOSE LIVES WERE RESCUED GAVE HIM THEIR LOVE. MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE YEARS I SPENT IN ARMY HOSPITALS - TOO MUCH ABOUT ME, NOT NEARLY ENOUGH ABOUT DR. KELIKIAN. HE BELIEVED WITH SHERWOOD ANDERSON THAT "A MAN NEEDS A PURPOSE FOR REAL HEALTH." AND HE GAVE ME A PURPOSE AS WELL AS THE USE OF AN ARM.

HE PROVIDED ME AN EXAMPLE WORTHY OF EMULATION. HE TAUGHT ME THAT "THE PEOPLE" ARE NOT AN ABSTRACT, FACELESS MASS GLIMPSED BUT DIMLY THROUGH THE DARK GLASS OF POLITICS - BUT HIGHLY INDIVIDUALIZED MEN AND WOMEN, AS CAPABLE AS HE WAS OF BETTERING THEMSELVES AND THE WORLD AROUND THEM - AS IMBUED WITH HIS IDEALISM - AS PROTECTIVE OF HIS FAITH. HE TAUGHT ME THAT THOSE WHO CLAIM TO SERVE THE PUBLIC MUST BE HEALERS THEMSELVES, MINISTERING TO THE BODY POLITIC AS HE MINISTERED TO THE PHYSICAL ONE.

HAMPAR KELIKIAN'S CONTRIBUTIONS DID NOT HALT WITH THE END OF THE WAR. HAVING SALVAGED LIFE FOR SO MANY MEN IN UNIFORM, HE RETURNED TO THIS COUNTRY TO TURN HIS ATTENTION TO DEFORMED CHILDREN, FOR WHOM NO ONE

ELSE WOULD FIGHT A LONELY BATTLE. HE DECLARED HIS OWN WAR ON CONGENITAL DEFORMITIES. HE WAGED THAT WAR ON MANY FRONTS: IN SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS AND ON THE OPERATING TABLE, AT HOSPITAL BEDSIDES AND IN THE LIVING ROOMS OF PARENTS WHO CAME TO REGARD HIM, RIGHTFULLY ENOUGH, AS A SORT OF MODERN-DAY MIRACLE WORKER.

"THE MECHANICAL PART OF SURGERY," HE ONCE EXPLAINED, "IS LIKE CARPENTRY. ANYONE CAN LEARN THAT. THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO BE ABLE TO SUFFER WITH THE PATIENT, TO SEE IF THEY ARE IN PAIN."

TODAY IS OUR TURN TO SUFFER, FOR DR. K HAS ENDED HIS CAREER OF SERVICE ON THIS PLANET. HIS PASSING MAY COUNT FOR LITTLE IN THE WORLD'S RECORD, BUT FOR ANYONE WHOSE PATH EVER CROSSED HIS, THE MOMENT HAS ITS RIGHT TO SORROW, AND THE YEARS AHEAD WILL BE AT LEAST A LITTLE LONELIER.

ROBERT FROST SAID IT BEST...

"NATURE'S FIRST GREEN IS GOLD," HE WROTE,
HER HARDEST HUE TO HOLD,
HER EARLY LEAF'S A FLOWER,
BUT ONLY SO AN HOUR.
THEN LEAF SUBSIDES TO LEAF,
SO EDEN SANK TO GRIEF.
SO DAWN GOES DOWN TO DAY,
NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY."

HAMPAR KELIKIAN WAS PURE GOLD. AND IF HE CANNOT STAY HERE, AMONG HIS

FRIENDS AND ADMIRERS, WE CAN AT LEAST TAKE HEART AND TAKE COURAGE FROM THE LIFE HE LIVED. ONLY A FEW AMONG US CAN GENUINELY CLAIM TO HAVE IMPROVED THE LOT OF HUMANITY. DR. K WAS TOO MODEST TO MAKE ANY SUCH CLAIM. AND SO WE WILL HAVE TO MAKE IT FOR HIM. HE WILL BE MISSED, AS SURELY AS HE WILL BE MOURNED. HE WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN. I EXTEND MY DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS WIDOW OVSANNA, HIS DAUGHTERS ALICE AND VIRGINIA, AND HIS SON ARMEN. GREAT AS THEIR CURRENT SENSE OF LOSS MUST BE, THEY CAN TAKE ULTIMATE PRIDE IN HAVING SHARED IN SO TRIUMPHANT A LIFE.