

A Grassroots Movement

Last evening a group of friends, colleagues and patients of Dr. John Catchpool gathered at the home of Gina and Mike Cerré to honor this man for his years of service to the community of Sausalito and to the communities of the world. If you know Dr. Catchpool or had an opportunity to read Damien English's excellent interview article which appeared in the Marin Scope about 6 months ago, you would know the colorful and distinguished medical career Dr. Catchpool had before settling down in Sausalito to be an extraordinary general practitioner. Folks traveled from near and far to be there, one young woman who hails from Palo Alto told me that Dr. Catchpool has ministered to three generations of her family. Many related humorous and poignant anecdotes of their experiences with Dr. Catchpool. Carol Raisbeck recalled being in the hospital very sick under heavy sedation for a "legionnaire's" related disease. Each morning while still heavily sedated she would notice the outline of a person standing by her bed. On this particular morning while still in a drug haze she started reciting words to poem that she had learned as a little girl: "Oh to be in England now that April's here." That was all she could remember. Then she heard a voice finishing it..."whoever wakes in England some morning unaware.....," it was the voice of Dr. Catchpool, she later learned.

I had the opportunity to speak with two of his colleagues, Emil Zuckerkandl and Rick Hicks. Dr. Zuckerkandle, who first met Dr. Catchpool while working on a research project with Nobel Prize winner Linus Pauling, related how Linus Pauling met John Catchpool while visiting Albert Schweitzer in Africa. "Linus was so impressed with John that he invited John to join him in Pasadena to work on a research project on the mechanisms of anesthesia. Dr. Hicks, who is the Chairman of Molecular Medical Science at Stanford, also met Dr. Catchpool while working with Linus Pauling. "John Catchpool has great empathy for his fellow man, Dr. Hicks stated. Earlier that evening, Dr. Hicks had presented Dr. Catchpool with a framed letter that Dr. Hicks had written in 1995, nominating Dr. Catchpool for the Fredrick K.M. Plessner award which is given by the California Medical Association to distinguished physicians. Alas, the award went to someone else but at the time, Dr. Catchpool was so impressed with just being nominated that he promised to frame the letter – something that apparently he never did, hence the presentation by Dr. Hicks.

In among the many accolades, Amy Belser read a proclamation that was issued by the City Council and signed by the mayor, Paul Albritton, which saluted Dr. Catchpool for "his humanitarianism in treating the world's afflicted, his achievements in medical research in the areas of pharmacology and epidemiology, his contributions to the fields of tropical medicine and human ecology, his service to the community of Sausalito as it's longest-practicing primary care physician, as well as the City's longest serving Santa Claus with real white hair, naturally rosy cheeks and noble girth, and who really did know how good or bad you had been!"

In attendance were Susan & Phil Frank, Robin Sweeney, Dieter Rapp, Michael Rex, fellow practitioner Dr. Darren Lipshitz and staff person Joannie Mongillo, Dr. Catchpool's son Christopher Catchpool, Mary Catherine Farley, Bob & Libby Bristow, Matthew Naythons, Shelby & Peter Van Meter, council-persons Amy Belser and Ron Albert, City Manager Dana Whitson, Chamber of Commerce President Babette McDougal, Saga Perry, Carmen Robles, Marianne Honeyman, Gil Munz, Susan York, Juanna Collin, Harvey & Meg Stone, Dr. Rick Hicks, Karl Simmons, Dr. Emile Zukerkandl, Carol Raisbeck, Gina & Mike Cerré and me.