

## **James L. Holly, M.D.**

### **Healthcare Address from December 2, 1971 Part III**

**By James L. Holly, MD**

**Your Life Your Health**

*The Examiner*

**May 19, 2016**

The context of my visit with the Lamar Pre-Professional students included my discussion of the OSR and the AAMC. My relationship with the Founding Dean of the University of Texas Medical School at San Antonio is part of that context.

(Author's Note: This letter was sent to the Founding Dean of the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio School of Medicine upon the occasion of the Dedication February 17th of the Dr. and Mrs. James L. Holly Auditorium)

“Dr. Pannill, this note is being send over night special delivery because I want you to receive it before the ceremony Friday night. It will not bear my signature as I am at my office at 4 AM writing it before we leave for San Antonio. Both Carolyn and I read your note. I repeat its content here for the benefit of my children with whom I am sharing my note to you. You said:

‘Dear Larry and Carolyn:

‘This is written in the hope you see it before the auditorium’s dedication as I want you to know that I truly will miss seeing you on the 17th. It is my turn to be incapacitated by a rebellious hip, and I can barely make it to the table for meals. It pleases be beyond words that the auditorium is to be named in your honor, as you deserve this and so much more in recognition of what you have done for our medical school. That has always been my favorite of all of the building as it represents new thought and new loyalties more than any other. You will be pleased to know that Harry Ransom said as much in the Commencement Address in 1970. I’ll think of you in that context but wish I could be there to join you. Send me a picture please.

‘I still have my piece of the foundation of the school that you and 1973 gave me and I’m glad that you will receive the honor of the name of the building.

‘All my love and best wishes to you and yours. Carter’

“Dr. Pannill, in my belief system the most valued commendation that one may receive at the end of life is to hear from the Creator the words, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant,’ that and the love and devotion of my wife, Carolyn, and of my family are the pinnacles of life. But in this life, there is no commendation or affirmation which I would rather receive than the one which you have given above and the one that my beloved School of Medicine will give me, my wife and truly my family on Friday night. Your person, personality, professionalism and example as a physician/professor remain my professional ‘north star,’ which provides an unwavering guide to me every day as I press toward the transformation of healthcare in my little part of the world. I have your November, 1968 letter of acceptance to the School of Medicine Class of 1969, which Carolyn had framed for me. It is one of my proudest possessions and I shall carry it with me to the ceremony tomorrow. I still read it from time-to-time, and particularly value your signature on it.

“I remember the day that I received the letter. A classmate in a class at Baylor approached me and said, ‘I understand you are going to be a doctor.’ I had received no notification and he added, ‘The Pre-Med Advisor told me he received notification of your acceptance to San Antonio.’ Immediately, I knew where the letter was. It was in the mailbox of our previous residence. I left school and drove to Bosque Avenue in Waco, Texas. No one was home and I approached the mail box with some trepidation because I had already decided that I would commit a Federal crime, i.e., I was going to look inside the mail box which belonged to someone else. I did and there it was. It was a wonderful day.

“I don’t know if you remember where we first had close contact. I was leaving the school one afternoon and your secretary rushed out and said, ‘Larry, you have to go downstairs. The Dean is there for a meeting with students who are interesting a forming a health-careers program for Hispanic children.’ I said, ‘I have to go home.’ She implored me and I went. You and I, and the other student with me, were the meeting. As a result of that meeting, I ran the Health Careers Program for two years. It was that work which led you to send me with the School’s official representative to the SAMA meeting in Los Angeles.

“At that meeting, a discussion was held about the AAMC planning to organize the Organization of Student Representatives (OSR) which still exists today. When the students were going to elect a Founding Chair of the OSR, I asked the student who was the official School of Medicine representative if he was interested in the job. He was not and I asked him if he minded if I volunteer. He did not. I spoke to the group and was elected the Founding Chair of the OSR. As a result, I was the Chair for two years, one during the organization of the group and the second during its first year of existence. You will remember that as a result of this, I:

1. Attended the AAMC’s 1970 Strategic Planning session at Airlie House in Virginia
2. Attended the AAMC/AMA Annual Education Meetings in Chicago each January
3. Served on the Executive Committee of the AAMC for two years, as a voting member
4. Was the first medical student to be a voting member of an accreditation site visit which was at Cornell Medical College in New York City.
5. Voted on the accreditation of our School of Medicine twice while I was a student.

“It was at a Chicago Education meeting sponsored by the AAMC and AMA that I chair a meeting of all of the Deans of Schools of Medicine. You and I sat on the podium. The oldest dean of a school of Medicine was dominating a discussion session. I leaned over and asked you what I should do. You said, ‘Tell him to sit down!’ With consternation, I struck the gavel and said, ‘Sir, we must move on, will you yield the microphone.’ You said, ‘My goodness, Larry, I didn’t expect you to do that!’ The audience applauded. I shall never forget that. Your sense of humor and propriety were parts of what I so admired about you.

“It was my work with the AAMC and particularly in voting on the accreditation of our school which is the capstone of our relationship. I and all of the students were shocked when you were removed as Dean. We wanted your name on our diplomas and we raised a ruckus, but alone among the students I knew that the reasons given by the Chancellor for removing you were false. He quoted the accreditation report about deficiencies of the School, when the actual reason was you would not fire Leon Cander, Chairman of Medicine.

“I knew he was not telling the truth because I had a copy of the accreditation report. I wrote a letter to the Chancellor and to all of the Regents, one of which was Lady Bird Johnson. I sent a copy to the San Antonio Express News expecting them to publish it as a letter €“to-the-editor. They did not. It was front page, 40-point type, ‘Senior Medical Student Challenges Truthfulness of Chancellor.’ I still have the original pin and ink original editorial cartoons created by Bob Dale for the paper.

“There was some discussion, I understand, of the Chancellor taking steps to boot me out of school. You offered to bring me to SUNY where you were going as Dean and to graduate me. The Chancellor gave up his plans when apparently his lawyers told him that I had the document which proved that what I was saying was the truth. The wonderful thing is that the truth is always the best defense.

“Dr. Pannill, your distinguished career should have concluded in San Antonio, but the foundation you laid has been built upon with integrity and excellence by your successors. I thought I would never meet another Dean who would be held in as high esteem by me as I hold you. Bill Henrich proved me wrong. When I met him, I thought that it was *deja vu* (all over again, smile) I know you have met but he shares your vision, passion, excellence and drive. I am pleased that he became the President of the Health Science Center.

“I apologize for this long discourse, but I wanted to write these memories down. They are a rich part of my life and I want to thank you for them. It was in your honor that Carolyn and I gave our first contribution to our School. It will be our honor to continue to support the Distinguished Carter Pannill Professorship and to continue to enjoy the history we share.

“I still stand in awe of having the privilege of being a physician. As I watched and re-watch the movie Secretariat, I am moved almost to tears at the portrayal of his running of the Belmont Stakes. After a brief moment, he is no longer running to beat other horses. He is running for the sheer joy of running. His owner shouts to the jockey, “let him run, Tommy; let him run!!” The jockey was holding on for dear life. Secretariat is competing only with himself and his achievement was breathtaking.

“Dr. Pannill, our school, your school, the School of Medicine, like Secretariat is running toward a goal, not before imagined possible in South Texas. You started us; Dr. Henrich and many others carry the torch, and many of us in communities around the country run this race with the abandon and joy of a Medical-Practice Secretariat. When I stand tomorrow night in the auditorium paid for by my dear friend, with my family, friends, professors, fellow students and colleagues, these are the thoughts I will have. You are central to them all.

“God bless you, my mentor and hero. Thank you for your love and care. It places wind under my wings. Remember what the trainer of Secretariat said the night before the Belmont Stakes, ‘Tomorrow, he is going to take wings and fly.’ Dr. Pannill, our tomorrow has come and many of us, having taken wings, which you helped fashioned, are flying! Amazing.”