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**Giving thanks and praise
Bridgetown, Barbados***

“Thanks are justly due for boons unbought”. Ovid

Mr. Master of Ceremonies, let me begin by expressing a major disappointment. I have been tricked. When Professor Hennis spoke to me initially about a festschrift in honor of Professor Henry Fraser and asked that I give a public lecture, I readily agreed because of the admiration I have for Henry. But I also thought I could animate a varied public audience and fire them up as I harangued them with one of my favorite topics. I would have had them all enthusiastic about some weighty topic as the social implications of the fluctuating fortunes of Gabby or perhaps something a bit more inflammatory as the need for certification and recertification of doctors. I imagined that Monday morning would see all adult Barbadians approaching their physicians, whipping out the Sunday paper and asking: “tell me doctor, when were you recertified?” Of course I would have left the island by then.

But Anselm then had a change of heart or of pocket and asked if I would speak after dinner. I could not refuse, but I did remark to my wife that I was becoming concerned that the only time I am being asked to speak these days is late at night and after dinner when niggeritis has set in and the only thing the audience recalls from my well researched speech is the humorous remarks I have made.

But then I reflected that humor is often the medium for serious comment. I changed my mind about jokes long ago when I opened one of my son’s college texts by Freud on “Jokes and their relation to the unconscious”. I have subsequently read a comment on that treatise which said; “*Joking is not just about laughter replacing anxiety and fear but is also a way of expressing unconscious thoughts related to maturity, social control, sexuality and aggression in daily life, all of which takes place in a public and social milieu.*” Interestingly enough, Freud wrote the book on jokes at the same time he wrote his three essays on the theory of sexuality. You may draw your own conclusions. But humor has frequently been the medium for serious comment and as you all know, the jesters of old were often the only persons who could speak truth to the king and not lose their heads. But a banquet in Henry Fraser’s honor is not the pace for a discourse on the psychology of humor or for ribald jokes.

* Presented at the Ceremony in honor of Professor Henry Fraser , Bridgetown, Barbados, September 11, 2010

In preparing to speak, I reflected on when I first knew him and on how well I do know him and the extent to which I and so many of us value his contribution not only to medicine, but to a range of other spheres which make for our social health. I think of him as the compleat physician in the same sense as Walton's Compleat Angler. I think of him as a renaissance intellectual who sees medicine as one medium for expressing his own humanity. In some circles he is known more for his artistic and historical bent than for his contribution to medicine in Barbados and the Caribbean. I am not competent to assess his contribution to the Historical Society and such bodies. I do know however that if you go to that fount of all knowledge-Google and search for Henry Fraser of Barbados, you will find reference to his work on the historic houses of Barbados, the Barbados Carolina connection and reference to the connection between Barbados and George Washington, before you find any reference to medicine. I do know of his talent as an artist and one of his early water colors hangs in my home. This is only one manifestation of his many kindnesses to me personally over the years and for which I continue to be grateful.

I also know of his talent as a scribe and raconteur, and I often marvel at how he can find interesting things to write about on such a regular basis amid all his other commitments. He may be surprised to hear me say I thought that one of his finest pieces was on Colin Hudson—a man for all seasons. He described Colin's *"passionate love for these fields and hills beyond recall"*. But as he shared three reasons he admired the man, in one of his finest passages he wrote:

"Secondly, his crusades to preserve Barbados from bad buildings and bulldozers. This aggressive, life-long fervour to fight the transformation of our beautiful gem into a haphazard mosaic of concrete and wasteland and rabland, followed naturally from the depth of his love for the country and his almost childish rapture for the wonders of nature—a modern day Thoreau." And he goes on—"How can one destroy, with open eyes this natural beauty? How can the rest of us stand idly by and witness the concretization of half of Barbados and do nothing? How can the birds sing when the trees are cut down?"

This passage evokes memories of the famous Rachel Carson whose book "Silent Spring" changed the world. And I could not do better than to apply to Henry one of Rachel Carson's quotations.

"Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life."

I wonder what it was in his early formation that led him along this path or if he somehow changed along the way. I think it must be the latter. He must have had to overcome the handicap of never having been to Harrison College to which he often refers with the reverence and respect due to that venerable institution on Crumpton Street. I

gather that he got his early education in a place in which they did not play knee cricket also known as marble cricket, nor did they know the joy of “tip and run” firms. Rumor has it that they had to make do with rustic fare from the fields of St. John and perhaps it is thus that he developed his closeness to nature.

But more seriously, I got to know Henry first as a bright inquisitive medical student and a member of a class which has distinguished itself here and abroad. He came to the Tropical Metabolism Research Unit and spent his elective period with me and was so industrious that his work resulted in several scientific publications. It was at this time that I introduced him to man’s best friend-the laboratory rat. I consider him among my research children whom I love dearly, and my main requirement of them is that they have children too. My mentor John Waterlow, whom I consider my own research father claims to be able to trace his research lineage back through generations. I trust that in time Henry’s children will be able to do the same.

When Henry completed his medical training and his training in clinical pharmacology, I was thrilled at the prospect of his continuing his line of research at Mona, and I confess now some selfish disappointment when he decided to return to Barbados which in retrospect was a wise decision. I reflected recently on the kind of advice I might have given him when he told me that he had decided to return home and let me reconstruct that discussion which of course did not take place. I would have framed my advice around my own return to Barbados, although unlike Henry I did not stay. I would have told him that I hoped he would be counseled by as wise a man as the Dr. Maurice Byer who as CMO, greeted me in his office in January 1960. He asked me what I intended to do and how I saw my career unfolding. When I was finished, which included my asking for government support to go to Britain for postgraduate study, his response was something that has been indelibly engrained in my consciousness. He said; *“Dr. Alleyne, I wish you to remember this. Institutions such as governments are impersonal. They seek to survive. They have nothing against you and they have nothing for you”*. He went on to advise that I should not rail at the government bureaucracy when things did not go my way. It was nothing personal. Of course I have learnt that his advice applies to most institutions, including universities.

I would have told young Henry of some of my experiences at the old Barbados General Hospital where I worked for one of the finest physicians I have known-Harold Forde. I could tell many stories of his kindnesses to me and mine and anecdotes about his twin passions of medicine and cricket. I would have told him of some of those who had preceded me like Eugene Ward and George Cummins and tales of the legendary surgeons and physicians some of whom as consultants, took the term literally. I certainly would have told Henry about the incredible nursing staff- and hoped that he would be fortunate enough to work with nursing sisters like Crane, Husbands and Hamblyn among others and a matron as effective as Ena Walters.

What I could not have told him then was that the epidemiological profile of Barbados and the Caribbean would have changed with such speed and that we would have to think of a new Maurice Byer. Barbados, like the rest of the Caribbean is now

confronting what I have referred to as a tsunami of chronic noncommunicable diseases. So with the benefit of hindsight I can congratulate him on the foresight of persisting with the notion of a Chronic Diseases Research Center and the hard work in getting it established and incorporated into the University of the West Indies. In addition, let me thank him for incorporating Anselm Hennis into that Center and mentoring him to the stage where he is self sufficient and looking to mentor his own successor.

But the work is not finished. Maurice Byer presided over the change in the approach to primary care in Barbados which altered the face of its health. The fifties and sixties were times in which the dominant problems were the infectious diseases, particularly of children and our primary care was predicated on the presumption of attention to single problems that could be solved with attention that was limited in time. The system was not conceptualized to address the chronic and continuous care that is needed for the management of diseases prevalent today. I refer to diseases as chronic when they need continuity of care and not whether they are infectious –communicable or non infectious-noncommunicable. HIV/AIDS is rapidly becoming or has become a chronic disease.

I was pleased to note that recently your Chief Medical Officer, Dr. St. John, perhaps in the Byer tradition, organized a consultation on chronic integrated care. I trust that that consultation will lead to detailed research on the carrying capacity of the present polyclinics, the profile of the problems with which they deal and the capacity to fashion the model of care which embraces effective first contact, patient involvement, community support and efficient movement between the various levels of care. Barbados has a mixed system of care and it is now clear that there are three critical components to such a system. There must be universal coverage and access to the necessary services, there must be a health workforce appropriate to deal with the system and there must be the kind of information system to weave and stitch the whole together.

Henry, perhaps in the next phase of your activities, this is an area to which you might bring your legendary creativity, your demonstrated capacity for commitment and the compassion which has marked your former endeavors. This is an area of parochial as well as global concern and there is no reason why Barbados should not be a model of chronic care. The problem is clear, the needs are patent, and I would be rash enough to posit that there are solutions to be tried and adopted or adapted.

You may say that this is not an area in which you have knowledge or expertise, in fact few do. So I would quote to you from Hegel's Philosophy of the Right:

"We do not need to be shoemakers to know if our shoes fit, and just as little have we any need to be professionals to acquire knowledge of matters of universal interest."

This matter of the appropriate care of chronic conditions is one of supreme universal interest. And if you plead that this is not a task for the retired, then I would ask that you think of spelling retire with a "y" instead of an "i" or at least use your talents in

other spheres to generate the kind of interest that will spur some younger woman or man to become immersed in it.

Mr. Master of ceremonies, it is not tradition or politeness that now inspires me to recognize the contribution of Maureen to Henry's accomplishments. I do so with profound respect and admiration. I have read that Maureen is an Irish name which means "star of the sea", and I am sure that on more than one occasion there has been reference to her stellar qualities domestically as well as professionally. She must be stellar in her tolerance to have been supportive of his many moves and moods. Henry has the tendency to be animated sometimes and my wife reminds me of an occasion at which she was at an airport as Henry was awaiting Maureen's arrival and never has she seen an adult so excited, so nervous, so anxious and so elated at seeing a plane land. Delicacy prevents me from recounting my wife's account of the physical greeting. Maureen, we thank you!

Ladies and gentlemen, your presence here is an indication of what you think of Henry Fraser and how much you appreciate what he has done. May there be many more years for him to contribute in the many fields in which he has shown the enthusiasm and competence that have marked him to date! In those years may he continue to employ for our benefit the wisdom that springs from the seeds of the knowledge which he has so assiduously acquired and cultivated! As he goes into this new phase of his life, may he from time to time express with satisfaction the sentiments so well put by Wordsworth:

*The thought of our past years in me doth breed perpetual
benedictions"*

I thank you.