

# **MEMORIAL RESOLUTION**

## **COUNT DILLON GIBSON, JR.**

**(1921-2002)**

Count Dillon Gibson, Jr., Professor Emeritus of Health Research and Policy, died July 23, 2002 in Hartford, Connecticut, at the age of 81 years. He was born in Covington, Georgia, on July 10, 1921, to Count Dillon Gibson, Sr. and Julia Thompson Gibson, and moved to Atlanta in 1933 when his father became Professor of Geology at Georgia Institute of Technology. Count never forgot his childhood in a small southern town, which instilled in him a lifelong commitment to civil rights and social justice.

Count received a BS degree from Emory University in 1942, and two years later received his MD from Emory. After a year's internship at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City, he joined the US Army Medical Corps and rose to the rank of Captain and Chief of Laboratory Service in the 110<sup>th</sup> Station Hospital in Vienna, Austria. After completing his military service in 1947, Count returned to Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center to complete his residency in Internal Medicine and an additional year as Chief Medical Resident. There he met his future wife, Katherine Vislocky, who was the daughter of the pastor of Saint Mary's Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church in Manhattan. Soon after their marriage in 1950, he joined the Byzantine Rite, to which he maintained a steadfast devotion throughout his life.

After completion of his medical training, Count joined the faculty of the Medical College of Virginia in 1951. His research focused on the treatment of infection using the newly developed antibiotics, including sulfonamide, penicillin, and erythromycin. In 1958, he moved to Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts as Professor and Chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine. It was there that he came to believe that the future of primary health care lay in Neighborhood Health Centers run by health care consumers in the community. He served as the Director of the pioneering Columbia Point Health Center in Boston, Massachusetts from 1965 to 1969. Senator Edward Kennedy was inspired by the example of Columbia Point to sponsor federal legislation to support the development of Neighborhood Health Centers. Count was also instrumental in the development of a

number of neighborhood health centers in rural areas, such as the Mississippi Delta and in Livingston, California in the San Joaquin Valley.

Count was recruited to Stanford University in 1969 as Chairman of the Department of Family, Community and Preventive Medicine, forerunner to the present Department of Health Research and Policy. At Stanford, he merged his lifelong interests in language, culture and religion with his scientific training into a holistic vision of health in which an individual's health is intimately related to his or her social and cultural environment. At a practical level, Count realized that interdisciplinary research teams were essential to assess health in a social context. He brought together clinicians, economists, sociologists, statisticians and epidemiologists to address problems in health and medical care. In 1972, he and Professor Nicholas Baloff of the Graduate School of Business organized the Interdepartmental Program in Health Services Administration, which later evolved into the present Interdisciplinary Program in Health Services Research. In 1978, Count organized the Division of Family Medicine in collaboration with Professor William Fowkes. Count was appointed by Governor Jerry Brown to the California Health Manpower Commission, where he provided leadership in developing and funding training programs throughout the state for family practice residents, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners. Count also served on the Board of Directors of several local public service organizations, including Lytton Gardens, Hayward Vesper Hospital, and the Drew Health Foundation. Gibson's commitment to consumer's rights in the provision of health care was allied to his interest in and sensitivity toward all kinds of human difference. He was engaged in the civil rights movement, and took part in the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. He was a delegate to the White House Conferences on Health (1965) and on Civil Rights (1966), and he served on many other state and national healthcare-related committees. In California in the 1970's, he actively supported the cause of the farm workers who had united under the leadership of Cesar Chavez. Their principles of non-violent resistance to injustice and the use of consumer boycotts to bring about social change were fully in accord with his own vision of the moral obligation of the individual to strive for social justice. When a group of Native Americans occupied Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay to protest their disenfranchisement by mainstream America, Count was one of the few non-Native

Americans they welcomed onto the island. Count was also an early advocate of the rights of the mentally and physically disabled.

Count had a great passion for foreign languages, and learned Russian, German, Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch and American Sign Language. In 1946, he observed the Nuremberg trials and witnessed one of the earliest uses of simultaneous translation. When as a clinician he treated patients who were not English speaking, Count realized that the technique of simultaneous translation could be adapted to the hospital setting. He worked to apply to medicine the concept of remote simultaneous translation, in which the interpreter is linked to the patient and doctor through a telephone line, with each hearing only his or her own language. He was actively engaged in evaluating the use of remote simultaneous translation at the time of his death.

Count retired from the Stanford faculty in 1991 and remained active until 1999, when he and his wife moved to West Hartford, Connecticut. There he was active as Chair of the Health and Wellness Committee, and as a member of the local Byzantine Catholic Church.

Count Gibson is survived by his daughter, Gabriella and her three sons, Tom, Max and Sam of Gillingham, England; his son, Thomas and his wife, Ruhi Maker, and their two sons, Taimur and Amir of Rochester, New York; his son, Aleksey, of Washington, DC; and his son, George, and his wife, Zoe Strickler, and their daughter, Chloe, of Willington, Connecticut. His death has deprived us of a wise and generous colleague who for many years provided a gracious model of all that is good in medical research and clinical practice.

Committee:

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