

To the Editor: The recent essays on Dr. DeBakey's compassionate care for all of his patients, regardless of their stations in life, as well as his consultations and presentations at well-known institutions have been a source of inspiration to your readers. I think they would be interested to learn of his efforts on behalf of a smaller, less renowned institution.

Although I have retired after 37 years of clinical practice, I was a cardiologist and, eventually, chief of cardiology at The Bryn Mawr Hospital in suburban Philadelphia. Each spring, I also directed a 3-day seminar for primary care physicians. While most of my speakers were from our small teaching hospital, I always invited one or two guest speakers. Somehow, I found the "chutzpah" to ask Dr. DeBakey to come to Bryn Mawr; he graciously answered, "Certainly!" Our honorarium was modest; his efforts on our behalf were generous. His initial visit occurred shortly after he rescued his wife and infant daughter from a fire. He arrived with singe marks still on his face. Several years later, he agreed to return to address our meeting once again "if your lovely wife, Linda, would pick me up at the airport like she did last time." As it turned out,

the commercial flight was fogged in; determined not to disappoint us, Dr. DeBakey hired a private jet at his own expense. He arrived exhausted, participated at the conference, and genially agreed to attend a reception in his honor at our home.

Several months later, as I lay in bed recovering from a corneal tear, the phone rang. "Michael DeBakey here. Heard you hurt your eye. Good thing you're not a surgeon! Hope you recover soon!"

Naturally, my first instinct was to ask which of my colleagues was playing a joke, but somehow, even over the phone, a kindly aura was being communicated and I knew, indeed, that I was speaking with Dr. DeBakey. Many people hold important positions in this world. Only a few can make those around them feel important as well.

Respectfully,

Harold J. Robinson, M.D.