

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
SAINT LOUIS (10)

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY
BARNES HOSPITAL
600 SOUTH KINGSHIGHWAY

October 19, 1945

Dear Fred:

It seems strange to me to be addressing you as a plain ordinary private citizen like the rest of us but I have no doubt that you are glad to have your pieces of pretty colored ribbon and your shining stars hanging up in the closet. I am sure I would be if I were you. The vanity of the professional soldier has always amazed me. For the privilege of strutting around with an inch of ribbon on his chest he will do many things which are sometimes very foolish. Maybe we civilians ought to revert to the medieval days and wear our gaily colored academic hoods and gowns around the streets of Washington. I am sure you must have had a stomach full of the whole military business; in fact knowing you as well as I do I have often wondered how you have stood it.

This letter is really to thank you for your extremely nice one to me of September 26. I would have acknowledged it sooner except that I had to take two trips out of town since it came and this has, therefore, been my first opportunity.

I think you yourself did a swell job as I have told you on several occasions. I shudder to think what the actual performance of surgery in the Army might have been if left to the authority of some stuffed shirt or someone without the guts which you have. I am sorry that I cannot make the same complimentary remarks about the medical department of the Army as a whole. I think the waste of both medical officer and nurse personnel has been a major scandal but one which the Surgeon General will never acknowledge. Something must be done before the next war to prevent the unnecessary and absurd wastage of medical officers. Certainly the old formula of 6.5 per thousand ought to be completely scrapped. I am interested that you are participating in the surgical phases of the history of the war. I hope someone will have the courage to say in no uncertain terms something about the wastage of professional manpower and the unnecessary wrecking of the whole plan of training medical specialists. In my opinion it is just as important to include that in the history of the war as anything else but I'll bet it won't be done.

I feel much flattered that you have felt free to seek my advice and that you considered the Committee on Surgery of the National Research Council to be helpful to you. Of course, we wanted to be. If we succeeded all of us will be much pleased. Reciprocally I may say that it was a matter of enormous satisfaction to me to have a sympathetic

EWING L. GIBSON

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