

NICOLE

TO: Dr. D.A. Henderson
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FROM: N.Grasset
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Date: June 2009
Subject: SPX book.

Dear DA,

It was a good surprise finding your book in the packet delivered to me. Many thanks and congratulations for having put together so many facts and figures on SPX, in quite a small book. I often want to check on something concerning the history, campaigns etc on SPX - have had to heave out the red "bible" with my lumbago groaning with the weight, and often having to waste some time to find exactly what I'm looking for... I'm sure all your colleagues are enjoying reading it since many only worked in one continent and never had the time to get a good picture of how SPX was eradicated in the other areas of the world.

I also think it's a MOST useful book for the general public, since it's easy reading and easily understood. BRAVO.

As concerns what you wrote about me, I feel it's too laudatory - but "tant pis" it's good for the morale when one is 82! however, I think there is a mistake which should be corrected if a further printing of the book should be carried out ie you wrote ".... assumed the post and held this post through the achievement and certification of eradication in India and Nepal"

I resigned in mid '75 feeling "burnt out" and was replaced by Nick Ward.

(I however worked for the program during the following years as a WHO consultant checking the absence of SPX in South Africa, Namibia, Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, Djibouti and in an Italian town where there was a case diagnosed by the local authorities.)

I was happy to note that you dedicated your book to your family. This made me remember the words I had written when in Delhi - so in case you never read them I'm sending them to all five of you, but especially to Nana; Since I never wrote about the anguish/culture-shock of many of the men, (and me!) arriving in India from sophisticated cities such as Paris, Washington etc - on their own, without any family member - I'm also sending the pseudo-poem I wrote shortly after my arrival in Delhi and sent to a close friend, who he had returned home after many years abroad.

Thank goodness most of us slowly adapted ourselves to Indian culture, the pessimism of many about eradication, the resignation of others etc and finally even enjoyed Indian cuisine, curvy + tea at breakfast, lunch + dinner! Anticipation to be shared with the family - Nicole -

Translation -

How right you were to return home, to your country, family and friends,
To never leave them again - me, I am so far from my own people.
Many here have opened ^{me} their arms, offering me hospitality, human warmth
But those who are in my heart, are those whom I left,
It is with them, in France, that I wanted to mourn our General,
I wished I were not in Delhi under a radiant sky,
But in Paris in the cold and the rain
Walking up the Champs Elysées with the mourners
To thank him and express my gratitude once again.

But his courage in the face of adversity will give me the will to
pursue my path,
To finish the given task, whatever the price to pay,
And perhaps from the starry skies of paradise
He will help me to leave a small offering of our Mother country.
I shall try by my work for the poor of these lands
That he be proud of me, by my giving a small light of Pasteur, and of
his beloved France.

But tonight my heart is ringing the knell,
My sky is black, courage escapes my arms,
For, seeing the long and steep road lying ahead
Weary is my body, weary my soul.

November 1970 -
from Paris where I worked

Written a month after my arrival in Delhi. I had understood it
would take several years to eradicate smallpox.. Sent to a friend
when I heard that General de Gaulle, for whom I had great
admiration, had died.

Vu adieu de Delhi - Nov. '70.

Comme tu as eu raison de retourner dans ton pays, près des tiens,
D'y rester, ne plus le quitter - moi je suis si loin des miens.
Tant de personnes ici m'ouvrent les bras, m'offrent hospitalité et
chaleur,

Mais ce sont ceux que j'ai laissés qui sont dans mon coeur.
C'est avec eux que j'aurais voulu pleurer notre Général en France,
Avec eux que j'aurais voulu exprimer une dernière fois ma
reconnaissance.

Je n'aurais pas voulu être à Delhi sous un ciel éclatant, mais à
Paris sous la pluie,

Où j'aurais marché de la Concorde à l'Etoile comme je l'ai fait en '68
pour lui.

Mais l'exemple de son courage devant l'adversité me donnera la volonté
de poursuivre ma route,

De faire le travail que je dois accomplir coûte que coûte,

Et peut-être du ciel étoilé du paradis

Il m'aidra à donner ici une parcelle de notre Patrie.

J'essayerai qu'il soit fier de ce que je ferai dans ce pays de
misère,

En y laissant par mon travail un rayon de Pasteur et de la France
qui m'est si chère.

Mais ce soir dans mon coeur il sonne le glas,

Mon ciel est noir, le courage s'envole de mes bras,

Car devant le chemin à parcourir j'ai le corps et l'esprit las.

Novembre '70

THE SECRET SPRING

by

Nicole Grasset

Rabindranath Tagore, perhaps India's greatest poet, wrote:

"Of all the higher achievements of civilization - the devotion of the toiler, the valour of the brave - the creation of the artist - the secret spring is to be found in woman's influence."

However much women directly contribute to human destiny by their devotion, valour and creativity in their work, the secret spring given by a mother to her son, a wife to her husband or a daughter to her father is still the greatest gift of women to the world.

In the smallpox eradication programme of our region, some women physicians have worked in the field, and it has angered me when certain men have advised us not to recruit them. Some of the women have been outstanding, and, on the average, they have done as good a job as the men and in "roughing it".

Nevertheless, the fact remains that few women are able, for different reasons, to take such an assignment. Therefore they represent only a small percentage of the hundreds of smallpox workers. Men, both local and foreign, have done a magnificent job, but I would like here to pay homage also to their woman folk and the role that they have played.

Practically all our men spend weeks, in many cases months, in the field away from their families. Mothers, wives and daughters are left on their own, many wives having to give up their own careers temporarily; some have children who help in easing the loneliness, but a child's affection, however great, does not replace a husband's love and the support he gives when a family crisis occurs.

During the past four and a half years I have spoken to many of the men working in the programme and have realized, as never before, how great is the influence of women on their morale, their health, the quality of their work and their decision to "put up" with and continue the job.

Most of our men have put aside personal ambition and desires for the ideal of eliminating from the world one of the most terrible diseases. This is possible only if the women at home initiate or share this ideal and also courageously face their loneliness, boredom and difficulties and put aside their usual comforts.

Love given to a husband and, through him, to his ideal and achievement may be seen in the following instances:

The wife of one of my Indian colleagues at the Directorate General of Health Services, who has frequently to go to the field, said to me: "He is not alone when he leaves me, my soul goes with him" - and, describing the wife of one of our international staff, "she is like dead for the 28 days her husband is in the field, and her whole being awakens and is alive again only for the 2 days in a month when he returns to his duty station - and yet she says she would rather see her husband during these 2 days, happy with the deep satisfaction of achieving something worthwhile, than have him coming back daily, frustrated by not being able to do what he really wants."

But the wise Tagore, if he had been a woman poet, would surely have written that the secret spring of women's devotion, valour and creativity, be they at home or in the office, is to be found in men's influence - their attachment to an ideal and ethical behaviour, which inspires her and gives her courage.

Dr. Nicole Grasset is chief of WHO's Smallpox eradication campaign in Asia. Her photo appeared in the last issue of the News, when she was participating in a WHO five-city news conference made possible via three satellites. Originally from the Institute Pasteur in Paris, Dr. Grasset has also served UNICEF in Biafra, Nigeria, where she did remarkable work. Dr. Charles A. Egger, Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, UNICEF kindly sent us this article which appeared in SEARO News, the news sheet put out by the WHO Regional Office for South East Asia in New Delhi. Like Dr. Egger, we believe that the thoughts expressed here by Dr. Grasset are both wise and profound. ed.