

A Patient's View

Dr. Scribner Was a Man of Compassion

SHARON PAHLKA

When I think of Dr. Scribner, I think of a quote by Ferdinand Foch: "The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire!" Dr. Scribner was compassionate, determined, and brilliant—a soul on fire to make a better life for his patients.

The first thing I noticed about Dr. Scribner was his tremendous compassion for his patients. At the time, I was 23 and was about to hear one of the most difficult things in my life—that my kidneys were failing, and I would need dialysis. When Dr. Scribner and his team delivered this horrific news, they made sure to let me know that this was not the end of my life—just a bump in the road. With a little help, I could still do all the things I had dreamed of doing.

I was thrilled when Dr. Scribner agreed to be my nephrologist. I didn't even know what kidneys did, much less realize Dr. Scribner's renown. When I better understood his importance and fame, I remember going for my routine visits and thinking, "This famous man won't have time for me, he has to save all those 'other' people." But to my surprise, I was the central focus of those visits. I never felt pressed for time, and he always made a point of asking for my opinion.

Dr. Scribner always had his patients' best interests at heart and pursued them with determination. After 16 years of dialy-

sis, I was physically going downhill. At that time, he said to me, "Sharon, you need a transplant." I resisted because of the horror stories I had heard regarding side effects from the drugs that I would need to take and also from the reality of rejection. Dr. Scribner gently but doggedly bugged me about it. Ten years ago, I received a healthy kidney from my wonderful brother, Vince. I thank Dr. Scribner for his determination.

And, as we all know, Dr. Scribner was brilliant. The medical breakthroughs he achieved are priceless to humanity. He influenced the care of so many people and will continue to do so with his research. Recently, he had been working on a soon-to-be published book for patients, *Dr. Scribner's Guide to Living Better with Kidney Failure*, that describes everything patients need to know to live well. His intellect never dimmed. At age 80+, he was still helping patients with his words of wisdom.

Sometimes I wondered about Dr. Scribner's unwavering quest to improve patient care. He had health problems of his own throughout his life, and I believe this made him understand what patients struggle with everyday. He was able to walk in our shoes and see both sides, which gave him a unique perspective and helped him become an extraordinary physician.

Recently, a client emailed me with her condolences on Dr. Scribner's passing. She said, "I know how much he meant to you for his skills, his discoveries, and his inspiration. He leaves thousands of people to carry on his work, including you, Sharon." We can all carry on Dr. Scribner's legacy—by finding and implementing ways to improve the lives of people who have kidney disease.

I hope people will continue his legacy, the gift that Dr. Scribner left us. Maybe we can't all save lives as dramatically as he has, but we can use our unique gifts, in our own ways to help others. What higher calling than to passionately make a difference in the lives of others?

Dr. Scribner made a big difference in my life and will always be close to my heart. I am convinced my feelings duplicate the hundreds he personally cared for and thousands of kidney patients he saved.

All of us can learn from Dr. Scribner. If we carry on his example, we will be blessed. ■



Ms. Pahlka is a life coach living in Seattle, Wash. Visit her website at www.lifeisagift.com.

