

Good Morning. My name is M.J. Tooley and I am the Executive Director of the Health Sciences and Human Services Library at the University of Maryland, Baltimore and FOC – Friend of Charlotte.

When Charlotte Ferencz asked me about a year ago to deliver remarks at her memorial service, I have to admit I was somewhat taken aback. I knew her declining health weighed heavily on her mind. And, while I appreciated her preparation for the inevitable, it is a fact of human nature that we don't like to face our mortality. And, I didn't want

to face the mortality of my friend. I was very much humbled by this grim honor. I had a year to think about it. However, I still wasn't prepared or any closer to the truth of what I would say when I received the email from Charlotte's dear niece Clara announcing her passing.

Here was my dilemma. Certainly Charlotte wanted me to talk about her scientific achievements of which she was rightfully proud. However, over the years those things had become less important to me as she became a dear friend. We shared so many stories about our families and friends

over cups of tea - Fortnum and Mason Royal Loose Tea – if

I am not mistaken.

I guess it is always best to start stories at the beginning.

After all, that's what Julie Andrews as Maria Von Trapp

recommended in The Sound of Music.

I guess my first introduction to Charlotte came about

thanks to the kindness of Joann Boughman, who during

the mid 1990's was the University of Maryland,

Baltimore's Vice President for Academic Affairs. She was

also a colleague of Charlotte's on the Baltimore-

Washington Infant Study, the crowning achievement of Charlotte's illustrious career as a pediatric cardiologist and public health worker. If you aren't familiar with the study, your best bet is to "Google" it because you certainly aren't going to get a scientific explanation of it from me. Simply put it was a regional study of the prevalence of congenital heart defects involving 53 hospitals, 700 physicians and 4390 case patients. This landmark study is still cited today as an exemplar of research in this field.

In the beginning when I first met Sari, we had several long, enjoyable conversations about the study and the impact of health care costs as the children with congenital heart defects survived infancy and how many of these defects were preventable with low-cost prenatal care as opposed to long-term disability care. At the time I didn't realize it but I was receiving a master class in congenital heart disease, public health, and epidemiology. She was a gifted teacher and her passion for the science and her

compassion for her subjects was incomparable. And to

learn from a pioneer in the field? What a gift!

But least you think she was a one-trick pony, there was so

much more richness to her life and career. As our

friendship developed over the years, she shared so many

stories of her family's travels from her birthplace in

Hungary (she was born on the 28th of October in 1921 –

she would have been 95 this Friday) to Germany and

eventually to Canada where they settled in Montreal and

she entered McGill University in 1939. She eventually

received her BS in Literature and went on to get her medical degree from McGill. By 1949 she was a fellow in Pediatrics at Johns Hopkins under the watchful eye of Helen Taussig, acknowledged to be the founder of pediatric cardiology. If you have ever heard of “blue baby syndrome” ... Helen Taussig would have been at the center of that. It was during those heady early days of pediatric cardiology that Charlotte worked with her and I am sure there is direct connection between that experience and Charlotte’s life’s work. She had many stories to share

about Dr. Taussig, one of which I will share later. While she later worked at Hopkins and continued to have an appointment in the Hopkins Department of Epidemiology in the School of Public Health, she finished her career as a Professor of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine and Professor of Pediatrics in the School of Medicine at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. In 1993 she received the first Life Sciences Achievement Award (a precursor of today's Researcher of the Year Award) from UMB in

recognition of the her many contributions in pediatric
cardiology.

But let's reflect for a moment on the times during which

Charlotte became a physician, a pediatric cardiologist, and

received a Master's in Public Health. The 1930's, and 40's

were not easy times for women to enter medicine, let

alone succeed. And she was discouraged from entering

that profession. Additionally, Charlotte was not a native

English speaker. Women were discriminated against. She

was discriminated against. Many times she shared stories

about how she was passed over for promotions and opportunities. But not only did she enter medicine, she advanced and she thrived, becoming a giant in her field.

She was a genius with a keen intellect until the end.

But, let's return back to the beginning of our friendship. As

I mentioned, Jo Boughman introduced her to the team at

the library. At that time Frieda Weise was the director. I

don't know how Jo knew this would happen but we

became instant friends. We just clicked. Frieda sent the

following remembrance,

“I remember how thrilled she was when we first mentioned the website project to her. I also remember having wonderful lunches with her and discussing world affairs. She was interesting and interested in many things; it was my privilege to have known her.”

In 2001 she established an endowment at the library to support resources on congenital heart disease, her web site and our evolving digital archive.

In Frieda Weise’ remarks she mentioned a web site – just what was this web site that she mentioned?

By the time we met her, Charlotte was closing out her career but we wondered how we could capture her expertise? Well, we came up with the idea – extremely novel at the time – to capture her knowledge on a web site on congenital heart disease. Basically, we developed an online textbook. For a number of years she worked side by side with Patty Hinegardner and Brad Gerhart of the HS/HSL to create this project. She was tickled with the idea that capturing her knowledge on the web made it more

accessible around the world. The site was launched in

2005 and redesigned in 2009. Some statistics since 2009:

From July 12, 2009 - October 12, 2016

12,966 users made 25,473 pageviews during 14,994 unique sessions.

Top 5 Countries:

United States: 7,840 sessions

India: 1,140 sessions

United Kingdom: 720 sessions

Philippines: 533 sessions

Canada: 329 sessions

Whenever we would visit her we would let her know the

impact of this 21st century work. She was proud not only of

the web site but of the idea this was a way to educate and inform people all around the world.

For many years she was our guest at UMB's annual

Founders Day Gala and what fun we had! She would get a ride on the Charlestown shuttle bus all dressed up in her gala finery. Picture the image!

She continued to travel to UMB and we had more

wonderful lunches and conversations. And I am so happy

that in 2008, we honored her with the Library's highest

honor – The Theodore E. Woodward Award. The award,

named for Dr. Ted Woodward, a graduate of UMB's
Medical School, Chair of the Department of Medicine, and
long time supporter of the library, honors an individual
who
"enthusiastically and meaningfully advances and supports
the work of the Health Sciences and Human Services
Library."

How fitting for Charlotte to have been honored. We now
have the Charlotte Ferencz Collection within our historical

collection where we have collected resources related to

her career and her interests.

As time went on and her health began to fail, she was no

longer able to get out and her world became smaller. It

was up to us to bring the world to her. Patty Hinegardner,

Rich Behles and I began our visits to her. On her 90th

birthday we took her out to lunch and had a grand time.

But as her health continued to fail and she was pretty

much confined to her apartment, we began regular visits.

Sometimes it was just one or two of us. Sometimes it was

a phone call or an email. We kept the connection. The visits always involved flowers and food. We always brought the flowers and a few times we brought the food but I am not sure it was up to her high standards so she started ordering food for our lunches from Charlestown. I guess she didn't like the pizza. Frequently it was enough to feed an army! Toward the end – it was just a cup of tea and a cookie or two – but it was never about the food. Even though we were confined to her apartment, our conversations became richer and our friendship deeper.

Charlotte shared stories of her career and her family. We heard more about how hard she had to work and about incidences of discrimination and disappointment. We heard stories of how much she enjoyed her colleagues and patients. And they enjoyed her. Her friend Jo Boughman shared,

“I think of her caring for the patients, subjects and students and her scrupulous integrity when it came to research endeavors.”

And Dr. Jay Magaziner, the chair of Epidemiology at UMB

recalled,

“Sari was a wonderful woman. She interviewed me when I was coming out of my post doc, before I was hired here at UMB, back in 1982. She warned me about the challenges I would face in the department. She was a supporter of the department, the library and me, through out my career.”

She told me that story from her side as well so it was corroborated.

Somewhere along the line, I don't know when, I transitioned from calling her Dr. Ferencz to calling her Charlotte and finally toward the end, Sari.

Earlier, I mentioned I would share one of the stories about Helen Taussig. Sari was proud of her time with Dr. Taussig and was very fond of her. Toward the end of Dr. Taussig's career, Johns Hopkins decided to honor her by having her portrait painted by Jamie Wyeth, grandson of NC Wyeth, and son of Andrew Wyeth – at the time Jamie was an artist better known for painting pigs than portraits and

Helen Taussig was his first portrait commission – but he was a Wyeth after all. Helen Taussig hated it! It was never hung at Hopkins and was given to Taussig who wrapped it in a towel and put it in a closet. The fellows who had worked with her took it as their mission to make sure the portrait was never hung to honor Taussig. An article from 2013 in the New York Times stated,

“When Dr. Taussig died in 1986, her family donated the portrait back to Johns Hopkins. For the next 25 years, a

devoted circle of pediatric cardiologists, by then at medical schools across the country, debated what to do with it. Letters were exchanged, opinions solicited, meetings convened in private clubs. Hopkins officials ultimately decided to place it on a wall in a tiny anteroom at the archives where visitor access is restricted. It was hanging there in 2011 when Dr. Taussig's last living colleague with whom she was close, Dr. Charlotte Ferencz, arrived to donate some letters. Dr. Ferencz, who had unveiled the portrait in 1964, was so upset at having to stare at it again

in the tiny space that she wrote a final protest letter, this one to the president of the university, begging him to remove it from even this remote area.”

In reading further about the portrait I have learned the portrait has gained more acceptance, and even been included in a Jamie Wyeth retrospective. And now there is no one left to stop it from being exhibited. Search Taussig and Wyeth to read more about this artistic battle in which Sari was involved.

The best stories we shared were those of our families.

How much she loved all of you and how proud she was of

you. She shared stories, pictures, photos, remembrances. I

especially loved hearing about the town in Germany where

her family lived and seeing the photos from when she was

young matched with the photos someone from the family

had recently taken during a visit. I loved the photo of her

and her sister when they were children and I loved

watching her eyes dance as she shared stories with me.

Such a rich life. So many stories. Her devotion to her family was loving, unwavering, and constant.

Last year my daughter got married and I sent the wedding pictures to Sari – she loved them and said she was so

happy to see there were still young people out there in the world falling in love, dancing, and celebrating.

And she had so many diverse interests. During my last physical visit with her we had a lively discussion regarding the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. I never realized she was a Shakespeare denier! She even had a notebook with

her proof. There were so many things I still could have

learned from her.

A while back when we were discussing her health and

heart failure she talked about how heart failure was such

an easier way to go compared to cancer – I know she had

her sister and niece in mind. And I know from our

conversations, that she was ready to go.

That doesn't make it any easier for us.

I never left Sari without making sure she knew how much

she meant to me.

I read somewhere that people come and go, and that everyone has been in your life for a reason – to teach you or to love you or to just experience life with you. Let's all be thankful for all the ways Sari Ferencz taught us, loved us and experienced life with us.

Thank you.