

INTRODUCTION OF THE SOPER LECTURE

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Fred Soper dedicated his life to the eradication of disease. Soper's legendary efforts in the battle against yellow fever and his leadership of the successful campaigns to eradicate *Anopheles gambiae* from Brazil and later from Egypt are emblazoned on the records of public health achievements of the 20th century. In *Ventures in World Health, the Memoirs of Fred L. Soper*, the medical historian John Duffy noted, "Fred Soper can best be described as a secular medical missionary. Appalled by sickness and disease, he was determined to do all in his power to eliminate its cause. In many respects he epitomizes the best of those American qualities of practicality, forthrightness, moral certainty, and an impelling urge to reform."¹

As a tribute to this remarkable public health leader, the Gorgas Memorial Institute established the Soper Lectureship shortly after Fred Soper's death in 1977 and has recently made provision for its endowment. Don Hopkins, our Society's 1991 lectureship recipient, is also a man who has channeled his efforts toward the eradication of disease. His own considerable contributions to public health seem likely to extend well into the 21st century.

After completing his medical degree at the University of Chicago and his internship at San Francisco General Hospital, Don joined the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and was assigned to Sierra Leone with the newly created Smallpox/Measles program. On his return to the United States two years later, he completed his pediatric residency, spent an additional two years at CDC, and then joined the faculty of the Harvard School of Public Health as Assistant Professor of Tropical Public Health. Here he continued his participation in the global smallpox eradication effort and was active in furthering the anti-yaws campaign in the Americas. In 1977 he returned to CDC, where he was subsequently appointed Assistant Director for International Health and in 1984, Deputy Director of CDC.

During this period, his consuming interest in the prospect of eradicating Guinea worm disease

was rekindled and he produced several key publications, framing a challenge to the public health establishment. It was evident, however, that the effort required to launch such an undertaking was not consonant with the duties of a CDC Deputy Director, so when Bill Foege suggested that Global 2000 of the Carter Presidential Center lead a program to eradicate Guinea worm, Don accepted a position as Senior Consultant. Since 1987, he has thrown his full energy into the development of the global eradication effort.

He is a member of numerous advisory boards and holds several academic appointments. His book, *Princes and Peasants: Smallpox in History*, published in 1984, was nominated for a Pulitzer prize, and he has received honors and recognitions too numerous to detail.

In his participation and leadership in the campaigns to eradicate smallpox and Guinea worm disease, Donald Hopkins exemplifies many of the qualities that Paul Russell noted in Fred Soper: "a consistently optimistic and fearless vision of the possible, an extraordinary ability to select and inspire capable and loyal staffs, an exceptional talent for organizing and administering difficult projects, a skill in selecting and improving effective tools, a genius in exploiting weaknesses in the ecological defenses of his insect enemies, an inborn trait of relentless pursuit, and a powerful 'I will not quit' inner strength."²

It is with special pleasure that I introduce our speaker, whose topic this afternoon is "Homing in on Helminths."

REFERENCES

1. Duffy J, 1977. Editor's note. Duffy J, ed. *Ventures in World Health: The Memoirs of Fred Lowe Soper*. Washington, DC: Pan American Health Organization, xiii.
2. Russell PF, 1977. Foreword. Duffy J, ed. *Ventures in World Health: The Memoirs of Fred Lowe Soper*. Washington DC: Pan American Health Organization, vii.