

Doctor Lewis' Passing

– Diary Entry by Mildred Lewis –

Editor's Note: The following narrative has been taken from Mildred Lewis' personal hand-written diary account of Doctor Lewis' last days (she refers to him often here as 'Minie' or 'Father'). Highly personal notes have been edited for privacy but the content's integrity remains intact. The pages begin on March 14 (1960), but she wrote in long hand over the next 16 pages, noting the days that she recorded. Editor's notes are in brackets and italics.

March 14, 1960

Had a very full day - appointments up until 11 P.M. - Jaqueline Chamberline came before leaving for Paris.

Minie and I went to Borrego but he was quiet and his energy subdued. He seemed to feel a slight rattling in his chest, but we figured he was simply coming down with a cold. Wednesday evening we saw Durga & planned a picnic for Thursday. Together we all went to Montezuma to see the new road [now the Montezuma Grade that goes down into Borrego Springs. In those days, travelers had to go down to Scissors' Crossing and through Yaqui Pass to get to the Borrego Valley]. Gottlinder went with us - we had a nice trip but Father was just not feeling his usual energetic self. However he never complained. We stayed on in Borrego until Sat afternoon arriving home in time for the monk's meditation at 7:30.

Sunday was Hollywood Sunday. He was still feeling a bit under the weather, so I knew it was going to be a long day for him - but he enjoyed it and his talk was the best - so everyone said.

Sunday night meditation at the Retreat was carried on as usual as well as the Men's Class. We did not know it then, but this was Father's last Sunday meditation.

Monday he kept his few appointments despite fatigue and still feeling some soreness still in his chest.

Tuesday, March 22 - Before leaving for Borrego he updated our family doctor on his health. The physician gave him the go-ahead, but asked Doctor to call him when he returned and suggested that he come & see him Thursday if he had not improved by then. Still feeling the rattling in the chest by Wednesday night, I called Brenda to have her make an doctor's appointment for Father on Thursday P.M. We left Borrego [on Thursday] about 11:45 A.M. and went directly to La Jolla and saw Dr. Carmichael. Dr C. called me in after a few minutes with Father, and with only his positive way explained that Doctor had heart failure. He told us that Father should have complete rest with a no sodium diet. We made an appointment for Tues. for a complete examination and X-Rays.

Of course, Father insisted when he was in Dr C.'s office that he still conduct Geo. Neilson's funeral on Friday AM at 9 & church on Sunday AM. Mar 20. Dr Carmichael preferred that he have complete rest, but agreed – adding that “that was all.” Father preached a magnificent sermon on Sunday. Obeying his

doctor's wishes, he omitted his class & meditation on Sunday night. Monday we tried to keep a quiet schedule. Father spoke with just a few people - as he did on Sat. PM. - but no appointments.

Tues. morning we were at the Dr's office at 8 AM and all of the tests were performed. We reached home about noon. - during the afternoon Minie rested as much as possible. Each day after that, he would stay on the Patio in the sunshine for a while and then sit in the study, read a little, write a letter or two - but he remained very quiet. Saturday was his birthday - John [Rosser], Vincent, Suzie [John's sister], Michele, Brenda & me celebrated his birthday party there in the Study with him. He was so sweet when John & Vinie gave him the television set and the card with all the names of the people from the [Hollywood] group but something was different. John & Suzanne gave him the beautiful white meditation blanket for Borrego. After the little party, Father insisted on going on to the men's meditation on Saturday evening, but we did not stay all through Sunday. Brenda & Dad had a little lunch at Melody Café & then went home. I put Dad to bed for a while as he looked very tired, but when he delivered his last lecture he was on FIRE!

Dr Carmichael was out of town this week-end and he was to call us when he returned on Wednesday. It was very late when he arrived home, so he called early Thurs. AM. After our report on Father's continuing fatigue, he insisted that we take him to the hospital. He soon called me back and said he had arranged for a private room for. We were to be there at 1:30 PM. Father was very quiet the rest of the morning and although he really didn't want to go to the hospital, he did not put up any fuss. He spent the morning catching up on correspondence, writing letters until 12:40 P.M. when I suggested that we had better start for La Jolla. He advised me not to pack a lot of clothes - that he would not be needing them. As he left his dressing room, He looked in the mirror and remarked - "Imagine taking a young boy like me to the hospital."

Then he went into the Study. He walked over by the door and then looked out around the room. He then he looked in the mirror and when he came away I saw a look in his eyes - at that moment I knew he knew he would not be back in his body.

We had a quiet ride to La Jolla and he asked me a lot of questions about entering the hospital, etc.

The receptionist was very kind to him and did not require him to answer all the questions. She took him right to his room and then I went to the office later. The nurse was waiting for him and I helped him undress and get into bed - which was not his idea as he wanted to do some work. So he wrote some letters after I left. I returned about 6:30 P.M. & stayed until 8:30 PM - He was quite comfortable & seemed happy.

Friday AM: Brenda went to the hospital at 11 AM - I asked her to call me from the pay station to tell me how he was - she relieved my mind for she said he seemed quite comfortable but rather sleepy. I was so happy to get there at 2:30 P.M. He was sleepy but we sat and talked a little. I constantly massaged his feet and legs as he wanted me too. I went out & had a little lunch but seemed saddened to have me go so I did not do this again. I took a sandwich & some fruit. Sat. he was about the same but quite sleepy all day - Sunday he was also quite sleepy.

Dr C. told Michele on Sunday that Father was infinitely better and he was pleased with his progress. Sunday night was the only night he didn't want me to go home - but after a little bit I convinced him it would be better if I went. Monday he was much better, so much so that after supper we took a little short walk in the hall! Tuesday was still better, but it was a cold rainy day so he stayed in his chair during the evening 'up' period.

Wednesday Brenda took his income tax return & some letters for him to sign - But she could see he seemed different. They had a nice visit but he was really telling her to care for certain things - asking about different people & how to treat them. When she gave him the card from the boys Brenda felt he had some sort of a spiritual experience. For he gasped and then covered his eyes with the card & his hand - and then Bren saw tears running down his cheeks. Brenda was deeply concerned then, but did not show it. When she reached the Hermitage I could tell she was very concerned about the subtle change in her father. Just before she arrived home, Michele came in & brought me flowers.

I was a little late in getting to the hospital & when I got there Father was sitting up in bed - looking at his watch. He said, "You are late to-day." I told him I returned the auto manual to Amelia Breit. He said, "Good - you found it!" I fixed him up - he rested and I massaged his legs for a long time. I had promised him a pedicure so this day I did it. His feet were so beautiful and soft. - each day I had massaged them with oil.

After finishing his feet I asked him if I could do his fingernails. He said, "No - I will do them myself." We talked & chatted about his routine of the day - the Super. of Nurses came in and we had a nice talk with her about Borrego and Soboba & she told him when he got on his feet he should go and have a dinner at the San Jacinto Hotel - we never did this but Brenda and I went there while we visited in Soboba. Then it was time for his tray - He had a good supper - Lamb Chop [which Master often prescribed for those needing extra protein], baked potatoes spinach - milk drink - hot tea - ½ slice gluten bread - no butter - ½ canned pear. It was the first day that he had mentioned that his food tasted good to him. We had such a good time while he had his supper - joking about the spinach which he never liked.

After a little while the nurse came & said it was time for him to get up - and he was to sit up 15 minutes. I put his robe & slippers on him - the nurse commenting to him, "Doctor, you don't need a nurse with Mrs. Lewis here to do everything for you."

He always smiled or chuckled when she would say something like this to him. He sat in his comfortable chair and after 13 minutes had passed he said he would like to get back in bed. So I took off his robe & slippers and then got back into bed. He remarked it felt real good to get in on the nice clean bed.

I asked him if I could read him a story and he said "No - not to-night." Then I remarked that I hadn't had my sandwich so he said "You eat your supper right now." So I did. When I had finished it was about 7 P.M. He said "I think I will take a nap now," so I dropped the bed down some arranged his pillows. He asked that his meditation blanket be put by his head. I did this & then sat by his bedside - watching him. He slept so peacefully. At 7:30 he awakened & I told him he had had a nice nap. He said "I want to sit up straight," - so again I arranged the pillows & his blanket. Asked him if he wanted the blanket over his shoulders - He said 'No.'

Then I sat by his bedside - thinking I would meditate, too. In 2 or 3 minutes a tremendous sound came from his throat like a giant Kriya - then a great flash of light - like a million electric lights - his eyes shone with the most electric blue I have ever seen - The eyes locked at the Christ Center - and (he lowered his head) or rather his head came forward and there was the face of Sri Yukteswar enveloping his face. I was awestruck - frozen - then I reached for the call bell & immediately a nurse came then many nurses & doctors. I knew it was over - but they worked on my beloved - but he had gone to His throne of Light. As I walked in the hallway I asked God, "Give me the strength, O Lord, to carry on and let me be a Yogi if I am ever going to be one."

[Mrs. Lewis account here of Doctor's Mahasamadhi - A Great Yogi's Final Exit from the Body – is one of the rarest events ever witnessed.]