

Route 4, Box 33
Santa Fe, N. M.

11 February 1961

Dr. Sylvester B. Kelley
Harvard Medical School Alumni Office
25 Shattuck Street
Boston 15, Massachusetts

Dear Dr. Kelley:

To the extent that I am taking the trouble to answer your chiding, impersonal communication I acknowledge your claim on my attention.

In 1939 I gave up medical science for creative photography. I was fortunately situated that money-making was not a predominant consideration. I believed then, and still do, that creative talents compromised by material ambitions are soon destroyed, and that an artist has an obligation to pursue, if he can, his genius wherever it may lead without regard to ambition either for money or recognition. I do not presume to judge my own creative originality, and I must confess that I have been only moderately successful in living up to this principle. However, I have not lived the life of a dilettante and have not dragged my feet in this occupation but have worked at it hard and continuously all these years. The success I have attained has come to me largely unsought in recognition for the merit of what I have been able to do. It cannot be measured in material terms. My life has been a happy one and I have no regrets. It may be said that my expensive education was a waste, but who can say what I might have made of my life had I not gone to medical school.

I have five sons who have all developed into young men of integrity and individuality. They have all been through, are going through or being prepared for a college or university education. Except for my two older sons, who received some G. I. aid, I have paid the cost of their education. The three younger boys are still in school and college.

I sent them all to private secondary schools, not because I disapprove of public education, but because the public schools where they happened to live were poor. Needless to say all this education has cost a lot of money and is costing more all the time. I have only moderate means - the last few years my income has been in the neighborhood of \$8000 - and have been paying school and college bills out of savings and capital which will be exhausted by the time my youngest son gets out of college. I think this is the most worth while use I could put my resources to. People who have no way of knowing what my financial situation is have a way of telling me how I should spend money and what causes I should support. Obviously, I have to make a choice between the requests that I receive and have chosen not to contribute to endowment drives and alumni funds. The causes that I feel have a higher demand on my means and generosity are those more closely involved with the points of view which I hold, and have expressed, and from time to time have been active in supporting. I do not mean, however, that these purposes are more important than those involved with educational problems; the latter in the long-run may be more important but these are not long-run choices.

I hope that now you will be able at least partly to understand my refusal to contribute to the Harvard Medical School Alumni Fund.

Yours truly,

Eliot P. Porter

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