

Pierre E. Théorêt

1909–1979



Monsieur Pierre E. Théorêt, born on December 11, 1909, died quietly in his sleep at his home on February 14, 1979, following his usual schedule of activities on the preceding day.

A man with a kindly heart (he had served in his earlier

life as a priest in the Catholic Church), Monsieur Théorêt was a shrewd judge of character and very astute in business. These characteristics, plus a strong individualistic streak, came into full play as he embarked in 1961 on the venture that was to be his consuming mission until his death. This mission was the raising of funds to alleviate the suffering of those afflicted with leprosy and to support research directed towards the eradication of this disease. Toward this end, he established in 1961, *Le Secours aux Lépreux (Canada) Inc.*, an account of which was previously published in this *JOURNAL* (43:154-155, 1975).

This organization, becoming the Canadian affiliate of the Follereau Foundations in 1968, also became a member of ELEP (European Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations) the same year. In 1975, ELEP expanded by

adding two new non-European associates and changed its name to ILEP (International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations), a broad international coalition of charitable organizations having deep interests in the problems of leprosy. Mr. Théorêt was elected the first president of this expanded organization (ILEP) for the year 1975-1976; however, his chief interest and work lay with the practical business of raising funds in Canada and distributing them worldwide. In this he was indefatigable and imaginative. He claimed no knowledge of research and had not himself participated in work with leprosy patients, but he was willing to listen. He asked questions and then reached conclusions based on many considerations, as for example, the concept that if the investigator had a reasonable and significant new approach he should have a chance to prove it. Théorêt once totally unexpectedly called the writer by long distance telephone at 4:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning to discuss leprosy research.

Whether he awoke in the night of his passing is not known to the writer, but if he did the writer chooses to believe that some thought of those he served was on his mind. And so he passed into the company of Father Damien, Mr. Follereau and others of great vision concerned with leprosy — passed by the eye of faith as did they and as must we all.

Monsieur Théorêt is survived not only by

his wife, Madame Marie-Paule Théorêt and his young son Monsieur Jean H. Théorêt, and Le Secours aux Lépreux, but by those of us fortunate enough to have known him and worked with him.

His soul rests in peace, his memory remains warm, and his work goes on.

—OLAF K. SKINSNES