

EDWARD A. DEEDS

1874-1960



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Industrial Builder, Civic Leader
and Philanthropist

*A Memorial Tribute
Published by The National Cash Register Company
Dayton, Ohio*



From the Painting by Raymond P. R. Neilson, N.A.

EDWARD A. DEEDS

FOREWORD

This tribute to Colonel Edward A. Deeds records primarily his great contribution to the progress of The National Cash Register Company. His association with the Company covered two distinct periods—from 1899 to 1915 and from 1931 to 1960.

In a lifetime rich in achievement, Colonel Deeds faced heavy and varied responsibilities. Some involved important business interests, some the community in which he lived, some his country. His success in meeting them constitutes an outstanding record of accomplishment and dedication to the task at hand, whatever it might be.

After a long illness which clouded the last few years of his life, Colonel Deeds died on July 1, 1960.

Those in the NCR organization and a host of others who had the privilege of knowing and working with Colonel Deeds will remember him not only for what he did, but for his kindness, sincerity and unfailing consideration for others.

In all that he did, Colonel Deeds set his sights high and strove unceasingly to reach his goal. He was a builder in the truest sense of the word, a builder of institutions and of men.

Chairman of the Board

President

In 1899, Edward A. Deeds, a young man 25 years of age, joined the NCR organization as an electrical engineer. He had come to Dayton little more than a year before, after graduating from Denison University, and at first he had worked for The Thresher Electric Company.

At that time The National Cash Register Company had been in business 15 years. It had made significant progress in the development and marketing of a new product and it employed 1,500 people at the Dayton factory. John H. Patterson, founder of the Company, was well on his way to proving that the cash register was not a white elephant, as some had thought, but an essential piece of business equipment.

In 1899 a program of electrification of the factory was under way. Due to illness, the man in charge of this work had to retire. Deeds was recommended for the job and was employed at \$30 a week. Thus began an association with the Company which was to encompass almost half a century of total service, culminating in his filling the highest executive post in the organization.

Although totally different in many ways, Patterson and Deeds had certain characteristics in common. Neither was easily discouraged by difficulties. By nature both were optimistic and enthusiastic about the future. Both had been born and raised on a farm and knew the meaning of hard work.

Patterson liked Deeds and his attitude toward his job. As time went on, he called upon him in many situations which had little in connection with his basic work as an electrical engineer concerned chiefly with the application of electric power to production.

Before long Deeds found himself functioning in many different areas of the business, although still meeting his

original responsibilities. In college, and even earlier, he had demonstrated a definite inventive ability and the natural curiosity of an inquiring mind. His experiments with electricity were many and varied and not always well advised. One had resulted in the near-electrocution of his landlady's cat.

An inborn interest in research and development led Deeds to a close association with the Company's inventors. He was particularly intrigued by the possibility of operating a cash register by electricity instead of by hand. Until then cash registers had been operated either by the pressure exerted on press-down keys or by a crank. Deeds thought the job could be done by an electric motor and he set about to prove that such an idea was practical.

The problem was considerably different from any on which an electric motor had been used before. A cash register motor would have to be small but powerful. Its life would not be one of steady operation but a continuous series of starts and stops. Furthermore, the mechanism of the register had to return at the end of an operation to its exact position at the beginning.

With the nearest approach to such a motor then available, Deeds rigged up an experimental model, proved his idea would work and patented the electrically operated cash register. He knew, however, that an entirely different and smaller motor eventually would have to be designed, and so he employed Charles F. Kettering to carry on this work. This was the beginning of a business association and personal friendship between Kettering and Deeds which eventually led them into other fields and which lasted until Mr. Kettering's death in 1958.

Kettering successfully completed the electrification of the cash register, a step which probably had greater impli-

cations than either he or Deeds recognized at the time. Hand operation of cash registers or accounting machines under today's demanding conditions would be inconceivable. Thus, Deeds' and Kettering's work set the stage for future developments which were not then even vaguely visualized.

A steady expansion of responsibility brought Deeds in time to the post of Vice President and Assistant General Manager, in which he was second only to John H. Patterson in management of the Company.

The years 1913, 1914 and 1915 were important ones in Deeds' career. In 1913 a disastrous flood swept the Miami Valley. Measures taken to prevent a recurrence led to the establishment of the Miami Conservancy District and the building of the Conservancy system of dams. Deeds was named a director and president of the District, a position in which he served continuously for 36 years.

The story of his tireless efforts in fighting the battle for flood control, in determining the best type of flood protection, in supervising the system's construction and its later maintenance has been told elsewhere. It is sufficient to note here that he considered his part in the project as the greatest single accomplishment of his career because it represented the protection of human life.

A second important event in the 1913-1915 span stemmed from Deeds' interest in the rapidly developing automobile industry. Many different cars were being produced at that time, and two were manufactured in Dayton. Deeds saw great possibilities in the automobile, built a car himself, and gave some thought to manufacturing them. Because there were so many already in the field, however, he considered making something that could be used on an automobile.

Cars were then started by a hand crank, a condition with some parallel to the hand-operated cash register. Deeds and Kettering discussed the possibility of some type of self-starter for an automobile. They started experimental work in the Deeds barn, eventually developed the self-starter, and established the Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company (Delco) to build it.

His interest in the self-starter prompted Deeds to leave NCR in 1915 to devote all of his time to the development, manufacture and marketing of this new product.

When Deeds left NCR he had been with the Company 16 years. Oddly enough, it was to be just 16 years until his return in 1931. The intervening years were busy, crowded and fruitful. They included distinguished service as head of aircraft procurement during World War I as a colonel in the Signal Corps. On the business front, he served as a director of many corporations, was particularly active in the aircraft and machine tool industry, and did important work in Cuba in connection with sugar production. Yet despite these widespread interests, Dayton remained his home, and his responsibilities with the Miami Conservancy District were always a paramount consideration.

In 1931, the NCR Board of Directors asked Colonel Deeds to become Chairman of the Board. Thus started the second period of his association with the Company.

NCR, like most other companies, was suffering from the effects of the severe depression which started late in 1929 and was destined to last for most of the next decade. To the problems of the day Colonel Deeds brought a broad business knowledge and experience, familiarity with the principles of the Company gained through previous association with it, and unlimited confidence in the future.

To anything that he undertook, Colonel Deeds applied his ability to take the long view, to place the difficulties of the moment in their proper perspective and to set his course steadfastly for the ultimate goal.

One of the first things Colonel Deeds did after his return to NCR was to carry through an important change in the corporate structure of the Company. This resulted in the creation of a single class of stock instead of two, a change which had important advantages in terms of building for the future.

Recognizing that expansion of the Company lay in a continuing program of new product development, he did not allow reduced sales and earnings to interfere with the progress of this program. On the contrary, effort in this direction was increased.

Second only to new products as a stimulus for growth, he placed qualified salesmanship. Sales training therefore stood high on his list of those activities which must be continued regardless of conditions. In 1934, when the outlook was anything but encouraging, he thought the time had come to replace the tents of Sugar Camp, the Company's sales training school, with permanent buildings. The initiation of this program, which required several years to complete, not only gave the Company a highly useful facility but struck a note of optimism and confidence in the community at a time when it was sorely needed.

This period also saw the initiation and completion of two important developments affecting NCR's overseas operations. One was the affiliation of the NCR German Company with the Krupp interests. The other was a similar arrangement entered into with the Nippon Cash Register Company in Japan. Both were the result of long negotiations, in the first instance with the Krupp family in Germany and in the second with the Fujiyama family in Japan.

These were conducted personally by Colonel Deeds, who spent many months overseas in this connection.

Of the many qualities which contributed to Colonel Deeds' success in varied fields, one of the most important was undoubtedly his ability to get along with people. This was the result not of any conscious effort on his part, but of an innate willingness to recognize the problems and viewpoints of others and accord them every consideration.

He always said that he liked to sail on a "happy ship" and he consequently did his share to create such an atmosphere in any organization of which he was a part. He took great pride in the calibre, the loyalty and the spirit of the NCR family, not only in Dayton but throughout the world. He enjoyed meeting the members of employees' families, as he so often did on visits to the NCR recreational park, Old River, and occasions such as open house at the factory.

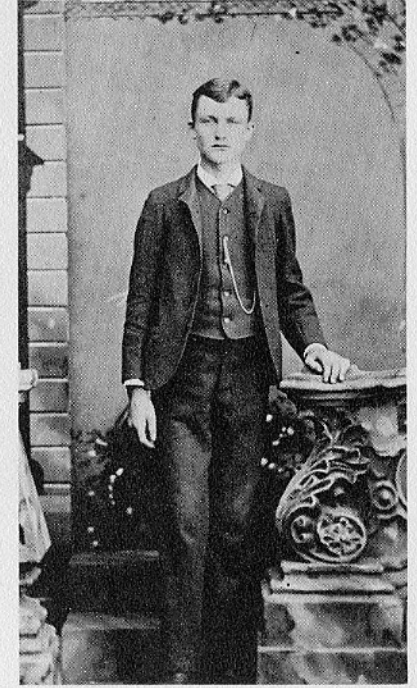
Those who heard Colonel Deeds speak in meetings or in personal contact will remember the homely stories with which he so often made his point. They recall his simplicity, sincerity and his always-present sense of humor. By his own statement he always took his job seriously, but not himself.

The past three decades have constituted a period which has brought far-reaching changes in NCR's products, its physical facilities and the scope of its operations. They have been years of progress and growth, years both of current achievement and of sound preparation for the future. As one who contributed much to this result, Colonel Deeds will live not only in the history of the Company but in the hearts of those who make up the NCR family.

Twenty-six years ago, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Company, Colonel Deeds wrote a Golden Jubilee message which was distributed to the NCR organization

throughout the world. He paid tribute to John H. Patterson and the many others who had built the business up to then, and he included an appraisal of the future which the ensuing years have more than justified. This is the closing paragraph of that message, as meaningful today as when it was written:

"To those of us who owe so much of substance and of opportunity for happiness to this business, it seems fitting on this, the fiftieth anniversary of our Company, to restate our faith; to recall that most lasting and substantial benefits of our lives have been made possible through the application of the principles and practices laid down by the founders; to remember that in carrying on the tradition of our business we are following in the footsteps of those who marked a path for so many progressive ideas that are helping our business and other American businesses to justify themselves in terms of service."

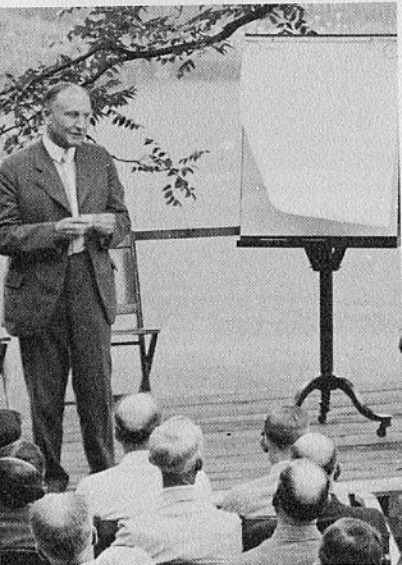


Embroidered outfit in picture at left had given way to austere dress of a young student of the last century in these early photographs of Edward A. Deeds.

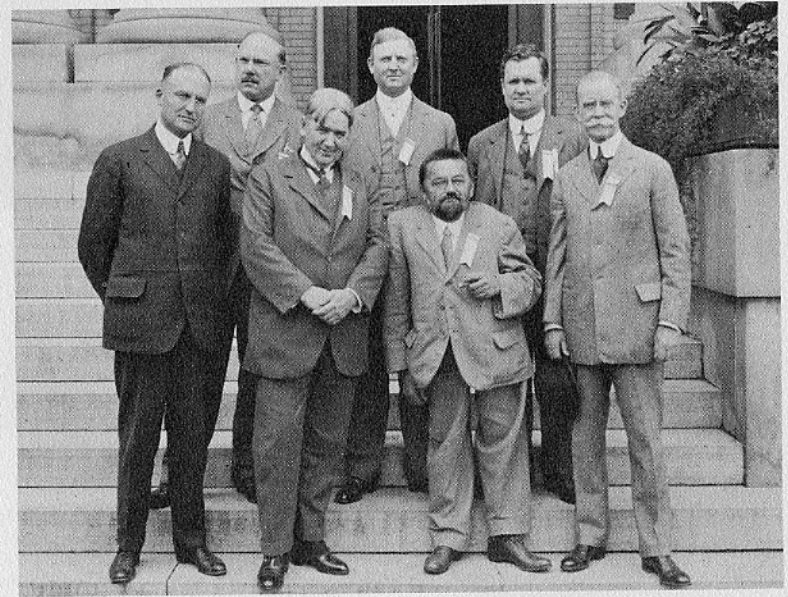
During a busy lifetime that encompassed many different fields, Edward A. Deeds was photographed thousands of times. The pictures on succeeding pages show only a few of the many different fields in which he was active. In this respect they represent a limited cross-section of his career, but at the same time they convey a measure of the warmth and sincerity which were so much a part of his personality.



Above, as the superintendent of The National Cash Register Company in 1904, Deeds already was carrying unusually heavy responsibilities for a man only 30 years of age. Just five years before, he had started at NCR as an engineer, below.

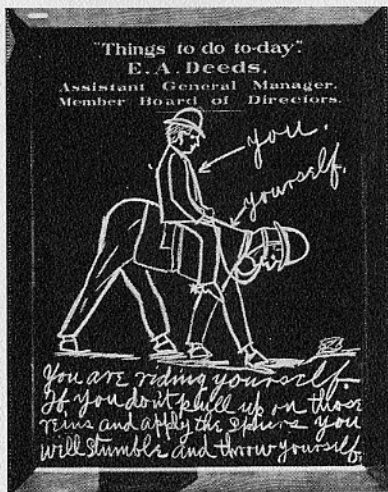


Above, Deeds is shown in 1908 addressing a meeting of NCR salesmen at the Company's famous sales training school, Sugar Camp, the first of its kind in America.

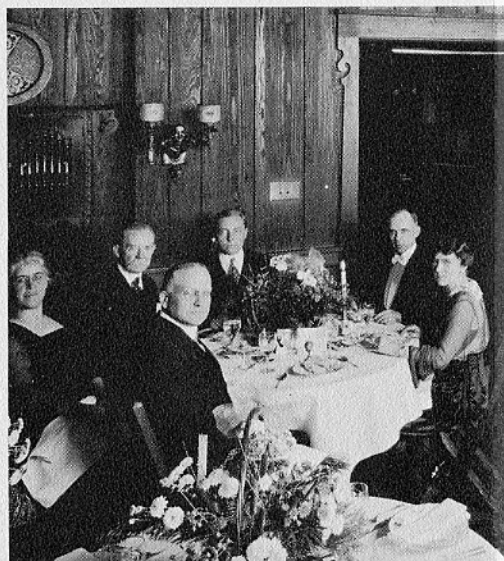


In 1913 Deeds, left, was photographed with electrical wizard Charles P. Steinmetz, second from right in the front row, and John H. Patterson, right, founder of The National Cash Register Company. Below, during a lighter moment in 1908, he serves as driver for a bevy of pretty girls. The occasion was a parade for which Deeds' car featured a butterfly radiator ornament.





"The Old Barn Gang," above, developed the first successful self-starter for automobiles. From left to right are W. A. Chryst, W. P. Anderson, Charles F. Kettering and Deeds. At left, the drawing on his office blackboard at NCR reminded Deeds that a judicious use of reins and spurs was essential to success.



At right, Deeds is shown during a dinner party at John H. Patterson's estate. The NCR founder is seen seated behind Deeds.



Shortly after World War I, Deeds and a number of friends made an extensive motor trip through the West. Above, Mrs. Deeds and the Colonel survey the scenery from the vantage point of an automobile hood.

The Core Memory Project



Orville Wright, co-inventor of the airplane, joined Deeds in roughing it during the western tour.



LUNCH ROOM - CURIOS

On the same trip, Mrs. Deeds and the Colonel pose for their picture in the doorway of a small western cafe.

Deeds and other members of the touring group test the quality of the "home made" food offered by a stop along the way.



<http://www.thecorememory.com>



Yachting enthusiast Deeds is shown above with a model of his ship, the Lotosland.



At launching of the Lotosland Orville Wright, above, was among the guests who attended.



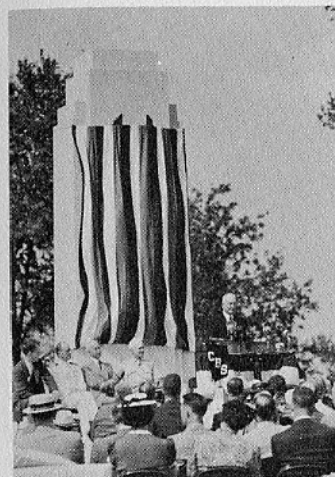
Colonel Deeds and his biographer, Isaac F. Marcossou.



The Colonel chats with famed athlete "Babe" Didrikson Zaharias.



Former Secretary of State James F. Byrnes during a visit to NCR.



Colonel Deeds speaking during the dedication of the Wright Memorial which was erected in 1940 near Dayton.



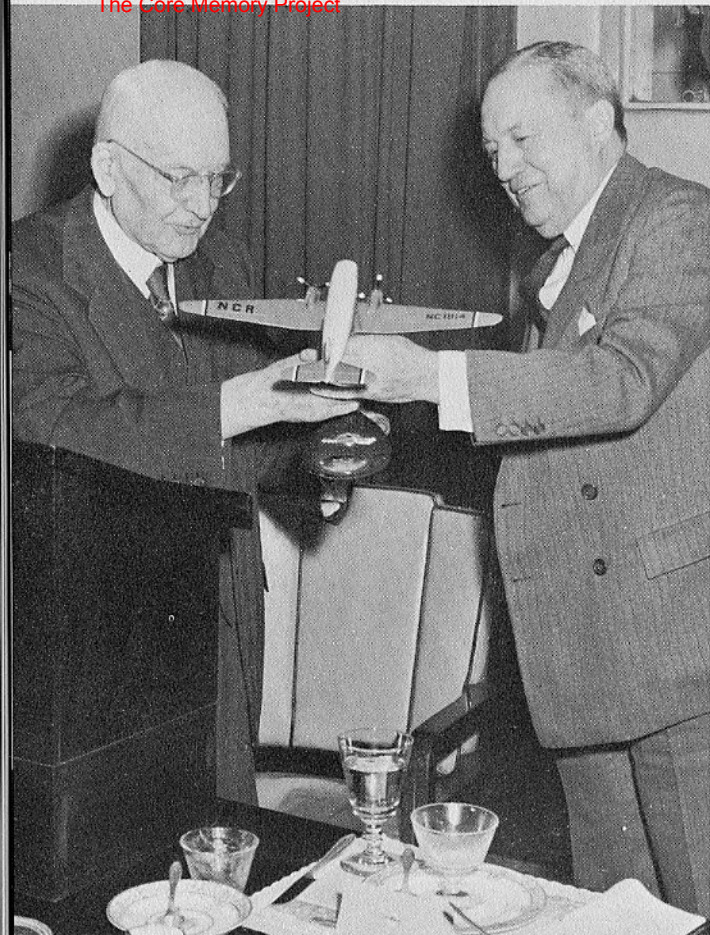
Deeds Carillon, a Dayton landmark, was completed in 1942, and on that occasion the Deeds posed for this picture.

The Colonel with three distinguished American inventors—Orville Wright, Henry Ford and Charles F. Kettering.



Establishment of Carillon Park provided a unique museum to preserve mementos of the past. Here the Colonel watches the arrival of a historic "grasshopper" locomotive, one of the park's exhibits.





Stanley C. Allyn, chairman of the board of NCR, was a close associate of Colonel Deeds for many years, eventually succeeding him as the Company's chief executive officer. In 1954, on his 80th birthday, Colonel Deeds presented Allyn with this model of the NCR company airplane.

It was Deeds' contention that everyone ought to get out the Golden Rule occasionally and "polish it up." Here he graphically demonstrates this.





During an open house at NCR Colonel Deeds entertains the family of Robert S. Oelman, now NCR president, with a rabbit fashioned from his handkerchief.



A huge cake served in NCR'S Horseshoe Dining Room marked Colonel Deeds' 75th birthday celebration.



Participating in a broadcast between the Queen Elizabeth, which was en route to Europe, and the General Motors "Train of Tomorrow."

Tribute by
Reverend Charles Lyon Seasholes, D.D.
Minister of
The First Baptist Church
Dayton, Ohio
at funeral service for
Colonel Edward A. Deeds
held at Moraine Farm
July 5, 1960

The writer of the Book of Proverbs in the Bible said, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings." Colonel Deeds moved among the great ones of the world in public and business realms by the eminence he won by his "diligence in business." With that proverb, we put the line from Kipling's poem "If" that was used of Colonel Deeds by Mr. Stanley C. Allyn at the "Deeds Day" celebration at Denison University in 1947. The line is "Or walk with kings nor lose the common touch." The Colonel was diligent in his business and stood before kings. He walked with kings and did not lose the common touch.

The National Cash Register Company was the business institution of his first and his last diligence in business, as it was his first and abiding love. He always kept the common touch there. When he came back to the Company, in 1931, the reporters met him at the railway station to get a

statement from him. He simply said, "I've got my job back, at the Cash." That showed his common touch with the workers who were waiting anxiously to get their jobs back at the Cash. Because he got his job back, they got theirs, and hundreds of others got new jobs in the succeeding years. He spoke in the common language and always kept the common touch.

Then, a few years ago, when he was retired but still going in to the office for part of the day, I sat with him back in the apartment, and he said, with a chuckle, "These days, all I have on my desk is my feet." Then, because I had just been around the world and had seen at first hand the Company's strength overseas and had received the Company's courtesies everywhere and had remarked on it, he said enthusiastically, "The Company has never been in better shape or in better hands than it is today."

In general business philosophy, Colonel Deeds was never a rabid doctrinaire defender of the free enterprise system as a system, without regard for the complex factors in modern society and even the inevitable participation of the public element somewhat in the nation's economy. But, from his own early experience and his mature wisdom, he held to the basic necessity for the free flow of economic forces by which there would emerge new products as men worked perhaps still in little shops or in corporate research without restrictive control. He put it this way to me one day, as we talked of the amazing new developments, "You are working on something new, and the time will come when you will need something that you do not make and do not now even know you need. And meantime, some other fellow is working on something, and you do not know anything about him or about it. Then, just when you need it, he is right up there with the thing you need."

The Cash, as we call it, and the Conservancy were his great achievements for Dayton. The Conservancy is his monument, but he was always the first to recognize the great contributions of others to the success of that project. He once said, "If the names of all the people who made flood protection possible were inscribed on a tablet, that tablet would have to be big enough to cover the entire side of one of the dams." But we all know what he did for the Conservancy, for the project in the large and also in some of the small things that were needed to smooth the way for it. There was a farmer in Miami County whose farm would be affected by the Conservancy, and he swore he would shoot anybody who set foot on his land. Colonel Deeds went up to see him and said to him, "I have a farm up in Licking County, and if anybody were going to do to my farm what you think we are going to do to yours, I would feel the same way you do." He straightened out the farmer's wrong suspicions, disarmed him, so to speak, and won him over. Again, it was the common touch.

We all know what a hearty person the Colonel was, hearty in his manner, his humor, his enjoyments, his friendships. But he was also an enheartening person; he put heart into other people. Arthur Morgan recalls what this meant for the Conservancy project. A time came when some in the project were discouraged and ready to give it up and were even taking measures to do just that. Colonel Deeds was in Europe, and when he came back, the whole mood changed. The project went ahead, for he put heart into people, and the Conservancy was established.

Two prerogatives belong to Executive Eminence like that of the Colonel's. The first is the power to command, and to have your commands carried out. But we also use the word "command" in another sense, as when we speak

of commanding attention or commanding respect. The paradox of true greatness is to be able to command what you cannot command, by ordering, but only by what you are in yourself. The Colonel commanded respect, affection, and devotion.

The second prerogative of Executive Eminence is the right and the need to delegate, to delegate things to others. But there are some things in life that no one can delegate. Two instances come to my mind. The first I learned of at the Deeds Day observance at Denison, when Charles Deeds ("Chuck") spoke on "What It's Like to Be the Son of My Father." He spoke feelingly and movingly of his boyhood years with his father, those years so crucial for a boy to develop his skills, to have projects, to make ventures. In all of these, his father encouraged him and backed him. Then Chuck said, "As I look back, I realize that he was always leading me out." That is a kind of leadership that no man can delegate; it is, it was, a father's responsibility and joy.

The other instance was in a small hospital room at Miami Valley Hospital, the only room available for Mrs. Deeds in her illness at one time. It was not her last illness, but it was critical. When I came into the room one evening, Chuck was at the window, and the Colonel was sitting at the bedside. Everything depended upon Mrs. Deeds's being able and willing to take nourishment. Those to whom it would ordinarily be delegated had no success. Then I heard the Colonel lovingly coax her and encourage her to eat and saw him in the dim light, as he himself, spoonful by spoonful, fed her the milk shake from a glass. He won her back for some more years together.

The word "devotion" we often associate with great emotion or fervent expression. But there is another word,

“devotedness,” that is just doing the simple, undelegatable deeds of love and devotion. That is what Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote of in her line, “I love thee to the level of every day’s most quiet need, by sun and candle light,” by sun and candle light, by dim light at hospital bedside.

Colonel Deeds wrought mightily, he built enduringly, he lived heartily, he gave generously, he endeared himself closely and widely, he acted justly and honorably, he walked humbly with his God and with his fellow men. In these last long months, he endured steadfastly. At the end, he passed on peacefully and trustingly, knowing Whom he had believed and being persuaded that He is able to keep that which he had entrusted to Him against this day.