Dr Marc Shampo, born in October 1924, has been a decades-long contributor to Mayo Clinic Proceedings, along with his good friend and colleague, Dr Robert A. Kyle, with historical vignettes that feature giants in medicine honored on postage stamps. These were originally solicited as a way to make better use of the blank spaces left at the end of articles in the pre-electronic printing era and have added a distinctive flavor to Mayo Clinic Proceedings. In an email from Dr Kyle received October 29, 2013, he stated:

Dr George Fite, an associate editor at JAMA [Journal of the American Medical Association], had noted that Charlene and I had presented a number of stamp exhibits at the American Topical Association Meetings. He told me that an employee of JAMA, John Mirt, had written a number of “Medical Pathfinders.” Dr Fite realized that a number of them did not provide much detail and asked if I would be willing to review Mr Mirt’s vignettes and add to them because he wanted JAMA to publish a book of them. I told him that I would be interested in doing it, but that I also had a colleague in our Section of Publications who was very interested in stamp collecting. He gave approval and we reviewed/re-wrote the vignettes for the 1970 book “Medicine & Stamps” that was published by JAMA in 1970. He then asked us to write new vignettes for JAMA. This began in 1969 with the first vignette on Sir William Osler and led to a 15-year run in JAMA. JAMA published a vignette as often as one per week and on an occasion or two put two into the same weekly issue. It kept us quite busy and resulted in over 330 published vignettes in the journal. A new editor of JAMA was not very interested in continuing so I approached the editor of Mayo

Clinic Proceedings who was interested in continuing the vignettes.

Dr Shampo shared in a conversation on September 8, 2013, that at the height of his stamp collecting passion, he would spend at least $200 a month on new and interesting stamps. He fears this is a dying hobby due to many reasons – as a side comment, he said that he did not think children these days had the perseverance to do the research, but he also conceded that electronic mail has greatly hindered the production of stamps for collecting.

In the conversation in which he shared stories from his past, Dr Shampo noted that at the age of 19 he joined the Army and was stationed in Germany near the Belgian border. It was often cold and wet. He said he would wring out his only pair of dripping wet socks and return them to his feet as there was no other alternative. Consequently, he contracted trench foot, and was returned home. He was very fortunate, because he said that most people who contracted trench foot lost their toes. This also changed the course of his life, as the other members of his company were either killed or captured during the Battle of the Bulge. Dr Shampo received his medical education through the GI bill and studied chemistry, only to find himself as an editor for a medical journal. He has since coauthored several volumes of books on medicine and stamps1, 2 and has recently co-written an article with his granddaughter, (an ear nose and throat physician) on stamps featuring ENT physicians. He said this is likely the only time a grandfather and granddaughter have teamed up on a publication. Thus, Dr Shampo and Dr Kyle have been writing Stamp Vignettes for almost 45 years. The vignettes have been published in four volumes over the years. In recent years, Dr David Steensma from the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, Massachusetts, has joined the stamp vignette authorship team.

References