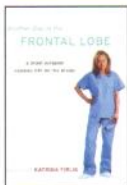
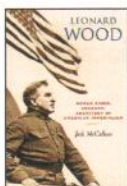


Too Much Like Ourselves?

Neurosurgeons Author Two New Books



Another Day in the Frontal Lobe: A Brain Surgeon Exposes Life on the Inside, by Katrina Firlik, 2006, Random House, 271 pp., \$24.95.



Leonard Wood: Rough Rider, Surgeon, Architect of American Imperialism, by Jack McCallum, 2006, New York University Press, 355 pp., \$34.95.

Neurosurgeons are writing books! Hot off the presses are two new titles by Jack McCallum, MD, and Katrina Firlik, MD. McCallum, who is on the neurosurgery faculty at Baylor and also teaches history at the Texas Christian University, has written a scholarly biography of Leonard Wood; Firlik, a recent neurosurgical graduate from the University of Pittsburg, has published the story of her neurosurgical residency with the attention-getting moniker of *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe*.

Firlik's book is in the tradition of Rudy Giuliani and Erin Brockovich. Books that glorify the American dream come true have always found an audience, and Random House is betting that people will want to read the story of a woman from Harvey Cushing's hometown who has made it in the male-dominated world of brain surgery.

Firlik has a gift for making neurosurgery sound intriguing. The book begins with this attention grabber: "The brain is soft. Some of my colleagues compare its consistency to toothpaste, but that's not quite right. Tofu—the soft variety, for those knowledgeable about tofu—may be a more accurate comparison." Neurosurgeons will probably not find this book as fascinating as some of our patients might.

McCallum says of Leonard Wood,

"Today, were it not for an army base that bears his name, we would never hear of Leonard Wood." For neurosurgeons, that may not be true. Those of us who have read Cushing biographies by John Fulton and more recently by Michael Bliss know Leonard Wood as a famous patient. McCallum sets the record straight as to Wood's medical history, but does much more in allowing us to know the doctor who became a soldier.

Leonard Wood was born Oct. 9, 1860, in Pocasset, Mass., and died in the operating room at Boston's Peter Bent Brigham Hospital at 1:50 a.m., Aug. 6, 1927. The 1880s were the decade in which American medicine transformed itself from a cult to a science, and Harvard Medical School, where Wood framed as a physician, was the nexus of that revolution. But Wood enlisted as a military surgeon and became a soldier more than a doctor. His medical background, however, had profound influence on his legacy as an administrator.

Wood's first military experience was chasing Geronimo, and he won the Medal of Honor just as Frederick Jackson Turner declared the American frontier closed. He spent a year as Georgia Tech's first football coach before moving to Washington where he developed a lifelong friendship with the assistant secretary of the U.S. Navy, Theodore Roosevelt.

Leonard Wood's conversion from physician to professional soldier was completed when Roosevelt convinced President McKinley that a cowboy regiment should join the Spanish War. The Rough Riders were a combination of Wood's western contacts plus Roosevelt's assortment of Ivy League ex-athletes. When the war ended, Wood accomplished great things as a natural administrator and a zealous autocrat. Within one year, he was military governor of Cuba. The crowning achievement of all his

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training was funding and taking responsibility for Walter Reed's yellow fever experiments and authorizing William Gorgas to use the finding to virtually eradicate yellow fever and malaria from Cuba.

The later chapters of Wood's life as military commander and governor general of the Philippines were not as successful. Wood had a dark side and at times his disdain descended to cruelty and even murder. Wood at his best was altruistic, intelligent, creative, self-confident and indefatigable. On the other had, he was intolerably self-righteous and his insatiable appetite for power culminated in his unsuccessful run for the U.S. presidency.

McCallum offers an interesting conclusion in the epilogue of his book: "In the end ... Wood never quite discovered how to fulfill himself or to satisfy others in the exertion of his own remarkable powers. Perhaps we have forgotten him because he was too much like ourselves."

Ah, there's the rub.

Here you have two new books by fellow neurosurgeons. Both of these books will serve as mirrors, and both will help us to understand ourselves better. ■

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