

THE UNPUBLISHED REPORT,

By Cash Asher

Reporter for the *Detroit Free Press*

“ I first heard of Dr. William Fredrick Koch in 1929, when I was a reporter for the Detroit Free Press. In the summer of that year, I was assigned by the city editor to investigate five medical clinics operating in the downtown section. With the assistance of the State Police, I learned that they were directed by quacks, posing as licensed physicians. They were connected with a national chain with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. Their methods were weird. They treated cancer, arthritis and syphilis under electric lamps with the bulbs painted red and blue. Patients were told that the lamps gave out ultraviolet and infrared rays that would cure their maladies. Clever-tongued salesmen were employed to frighten all callers into believing they were afflicted with dangerous diseases, and that they could be cured in the clinic. The clinic, the salesmen said, had worked out its methods and had procedures not available elsewhere. We raided the five one night, arrested the operators and brought them to trial. They were closed and about one hundred similar clinics scattered about the country were put out of business.

“The success of this effort pleased the American Medical Association, and I was asked by the Wayne County Branch in Detroit to serve as publicity director of a drive to enlighten citizens about the danger of cancer and the importance of an early examination. After this was over, the chairman of the Cancer Committee told me, facetiously perhaps, that virtually “ ‘every woman in Detroit with a pain or a pimple had been into his office.’” He asked me then if I would investigate Dr. William F. Koch, who had a clinic on Jefferson Avenue. He said that Koch was a clever quack, and I agreed to undertake the assignment.

“I picked up his trail at the University of Michigan, read his writings, sought to find some ‘crime’ that the medical profession could bring against him.

“Almost everyone I talked to believed that Koch was a quack. He was not orthodox. He was outside the established, accepted channels. I learned through hospital records of cases of cancer that had been pronounced incurable and then had been given the Koch treatment.

“I went to see several of these and I found men and women who had been restored to health after all other therapies had failed, and hope was gone. They were well and happy, and enthusiastic over what had been achieved. One woman with a bulging cancer of the brain had been cured six years previously by the Koch remedy. Cancer specialists had given her up to die, and she went to see Dr. Koch in a final despairing effort to get well. It took four months and two injections of Glyoxylide to cure her. Another case was a woman with an abdominal cancer so large that surgeons dared not operate. When the abdomen was opened, they found a mass of cancerous tissue that had metastasized into the stomach and liver. She got well after receiving three treatments from Dr. Koch. Hospital records of biopsies and microscopic verified the diagnosis in these and other cases I investigated. I found these people scattered throughout Detroit and vicinity...men and women lifted out of the deep valley of impending death and vigor by the

startling efficacy of the Koch remedy. All of this was contradictory to the purpose of my inquiry.

“Curious as a reporter rather than a detective, I went to see Koch. I found a man of solid dimensions, physically and mentally; a likable, kindly character, with a large head, a strong jaw, a ruddy complexion, and, most pronounced of all, blue eyes into which the alchemy of heredity and environment had never poured a strain of dishonesty or charlatanry. It was a relief just to look at him after dealing with the suave, almost slimy imposters who had operated the downtown clinics.

“I talked with him at great length. He answered my every question fully and freely.

“ ‘*The Free Press* will never publish anything favorable about me,’” he said. “ ‘In fact, I am regarded as a medical outlaw.’”

“ ‘But it seems that you have cured cancer,’” I replied.

“ ‘Yes, many, many cases; but The American Medical Association is trying to put me in jail. They want me to surrender everything I have learned to them, and I could get a million dollars by selling out. I have been approached by a group that wants to commercialize my products. But I have not finished my research, and I am afraid of what would happen if they got hold of my formulas. I will give them to the world when they are ready, and you can say, if you write anything, that I will surrender them for investigation to any commission or committee that approaches the subject sympathetically and its qualified to do clinical and field research.’”

“ ‘Have you ever tried to have the Surgeon General’s Office or the Food and Drug Department test it?’” I asked.

“ ‘Many times. They have been disinterested. First, they want my formulas. I have refused. I must be sure that they are properly prepared. After they are adequately tested, I will gladly surrender them to the profession.’”

“I noticed a Lutheran church publication on his desk, and a picture of “The Last Supper” on the wall behind him. He noticed my wandering gaze.

“ ‘You are wondering about my religion,’” he said. “ ‘My parents were devout Lutherans, and I have not departed from that faith. It is a sustaining thing. All one has to do in order to realize the feebleness of human intelligence is to look at a flower. It makes colors and dyes. I have studied color chemistry with interest, and realize that no one could ever duplicate what the flower does so easily and naturally. We could consult all of the libraries and use the most intricate apparatus and the most powerful chemicals and never succeed. The flower takes CO₂ out of the air with some moisture and some salts out of the earth and makes the color and then makes seeds to perpetuate itself. The flower follows the laws of wisdom. But where is man’s wisdom?’”

“I had no response to this. I lighted a cigarette and he pushed a tray toward me.

“ ‘I don’t use tobacco,’” he said, “ ‘but most of my callers do. It may be a factor in cancer. The coal tar in it is an irritant, and can be used for inducing cancer in mice.’”

“I asked him about his family, and his eyes reflected loneliness as he talked about his wife and children. He said he had been too preoccupied for years with his research to ‘see much of them.’

“He rose from his desk then, and asked me to accompany him into another office. It contained several filing cabinets. He opened a drawer and showed me some records.

“ ‘These are doctors,’” he explained. “ ‘They had cancer and recovered through my help.’”

“He showed me other records of members of doctor’ families, who got well after receiving Glyoxylide injections.

“Physicians are my best patients,’” he said.

“He gave me a glimpse into his laboratory, and took me upstairs, where he had a half dozen cancer patients. The place was scrupulously clean. When we returned downstairs, I noticed that several people were waiting in his reception room, and, telling him that I would return soon, I bade him good-bye and left. There was a quizzical expression in his eyes as I turned away, and I felt that he was communicating in me that what I had learned would never reach the light of day or night on the printed page.

“But I was tremendously impressed and convinced. This was an amazing reportorial find...had the curse of cancer been lifted at last?

“When I, the detective-reporter, made my report to the chairman of the Cancer Committee of the Wayne County Medical Society, I presented in writing the evidence I had found. The chairman read my report with growing irritation. His face reddened. He had wanted me to obtain the evidence against Koch. Finishing the report in some degree of apoplexy, the chairman proceeded to tear it into fine pieces, which he threw into a wastepaper basket.

“ ‘I hired you to do a job, and you came in with a lot of hog-wash,’” he said.

“ ‘I came in with the facts, as I found them,’” I countered angrily.

“ ‘Hell!’” he exploded. “ ‘Every scientist in medicine knows that this man is a charlatan. He has been investigated by cancer specialists.’”

“ ‘And I am only a newspaper reporter?’”

“ ‘Yes—and completely wrong.’”

“ ‘What about Mrs. G., who recovered when your specialists opened her up and found too much cancer tissue to dare to operate on her’””

“He wrote out a check and handed it to me. It was for seventy-five dollars. I thanked him and left, glad to get back into the sunlight.

“I then submitted a copy to the managing editor of the Free Press. He read it with interest, but advised me that the newspaper could not use it because Koch was under fire from the American Medical Association, and doctors in general.

“ ‘We have to accept the truth of authority, and sometimes overlook the authority of Truth,’” he said, quoting from something he had read as a journalist.