



Ambassador's Activities

2012

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Speech by HE Bernard Emié,
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom

Award of the insignia of *Chevalier* in the *Ordre de la Légion d'Honneur*
and *Officier* in the *Ordre des Palmes académiques*

to Professor Harold Holden
at the French Residence, London
Tuesday, 18 December 2012

Professor Holden,

Dear friends of the *Association française de Bienfaisance* and the *Dispensaire français*,

It's a great pleasure for me to welcome to the French Residence today, surrounded by his family and close friends, a great doctor and a noble-hearted man, Professor Harold Holden.

Cher Professor Holden, through me, France wishes to pay tribute to you for your distinguished medical career and the dedication you have shown over the past 20 years to helping our compatriots. In a few minutes' time, I'm going to be appointing you to the rank of *Chevalier* in the *Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur*, the first of our national orders, which Napoleon Bonaparte created in 1802 to reward exceptional services rendered to the French nation. And this is a very rare occasion, because I'm going to be awarding you a second decoration, the insignia of *Officier* in the *Ordre des Palmes académiques*, a ministerial order rewarding eminent figures who have made an outstanding contribution to enriching our cultural heritage. The Republic has a duty to reward such a close friend of France and express its gratitude to the altruistic doctor you are.

Before awarding you your insignia, I should like to go back over your exemplary career and life, which have earned you this high distinction today.

You were born in London on 2 June 1930. Between the wars, the capital was still a cheerful place, yet to experience the frightening destruction, huge loss of life and hardships which would come only 10 years later and leave an indelible mark on the memories of its residents. After the war you completed your national service, and your brilliant studies then destined you for a successful future. At barely 19 years of age you went to Paris to study medicine. At

the Hôpital Broussais, you didn't go unnoticed by the great Professor Pasteur Vallery-Radot, a member of the *Académie française* and the grandson of Louis Pasteur. You were subsequently welcomed by the Hôpital Necker, where your work with sick children – to whom that famous hospital is devoted – revealed a man who was kind-hearted towards colleagues and utterly dedicated to his patients. After this first French chapter of your varied career, you opted to return to London, continuing your training at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School.

Several years later you were to cross the Atlantic to further your studies, first in New England at the prestigious Harvard University, and then at the Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis under Professor Ogura. You then benefited France again with your expertise, working with Professor Portmann in Bordeaux and later as a medical consultant at the Portmann Foundation, a renowned school specializing in ear, nose and throat surgery.

In 1967 you became Director of the ENT Unit at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School, where you were later Postgraduate Dean. You became an authority in your field and the great majority of London hospitals owe you a huge debt for your innovations in ENT treatment. As recognition of your work spread, you became a fellow of the Royal Association for Deaf People, which contributes to research on profound deafness, a representative of the British Association of ENT Surgeons, and President of the West London Medico-Chirurgical Society.

It was only natural for this recognition also to extend beyond the UK.

You have been a member of EGFL, the European Study Group for Rehabilitation and Functional Surgery Following Laryngectomy. You have also practised in Asia and the

Middle East, imparting the latest innovations in ENT medicine in lands which already boast great medical traditions. You were Visiting University Professor for the Pakistan Society of Otorhinolaryngology; you also took part in graduate education programmes in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. Your skills inspired such confidence that you also became ENT surgeon to the royal families of the UAE and Qatar.

Cher Professor Holden, you have dedicated your life to medicine and to helping sick people and have never strayed from that oath which makes medicine such a great, noble and unique profession.

France owes you a great deal. In addition to your membership of the the French ENT organization, the *Société française d'ORL et de Chirurgie de la Face et du Cou*, you give ENT consultations at the *Dispensaire français*. It's also the latter commitment that has earned you these major distinctions. In keeping with a long public service tradition, the *Dispensaire* combines high-level medical services and real solidarity with those of our compatriots who are destitute. The institution is also a link between the UK and our country. For nearly 20 years, you have voluntarily and passionately dedicated yourself to helping French people who are sick and facing financial difficulties.

Professor Holden, through your contribution to medical research and your commitment to voluntary social action, you are an eminent figure in Franco-British relations in the field of medicine. It is only fair, after so many years, that you are now being formally recognized for this commitment. It is therefore a great joy and honour to be able to express this gratitude on behalf of my country. I also want to pay tribute to your wife, Lydia, who has supported and

encouraged you throughout your career, enabling you to have several strings to your bow: in a way, these decorations are also partly for her.

Harold Holden, *au nom du Président de la République et en vertu des pouvoirs qui nous sont conférés, nous vous faisons Chevalier dans l'Ordre de la Légion d'Honneur.*

Harold Holden, *au nom du Gouvernement de la République française, nous vous faisons Officier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques.*