

Fleming, Discoverer of Penicillin, Dies at 73

LONDON, March 11.—(AP)—Sir Alexander Fleming, discoverer of penicillin and thus one of mankind's greatest benefactors, died today of a heart ailment. He was 73.

The famed bacteriologist collapsed after having breakfast in bed at his home. Lady Fleming, 43, a Greek war heroine and scientist, was at his side when he died.

It was she who nursed him through pneumonia in 1953—and penicillin was credited with helping greatly toward his recovery.

HONORS, NO PROFIT.

World honors, including the 1945 Nobel Prize for medicine—which he shared with two co-workers—and a British knighthood, showered down on the kindly, shy Scotsman, but he never made a profit out of his discovery. The gifts he received from admirers he used to further his work.

Sir Alexander himself described his discovery in 1928 as "pure luck."

He had been experimenting with an antiseptic substance from human tears and saliva which he called "lysozym." One day a spore, presumably blown through the open window of his old fashioned laboratory, showed up on a culture plate he was studying.

Through a microscope, he noticed that a blue mold appeared to be killing bacteria on the plate. Further tests showed that the mold growing liquid, even when diluted 800 times, cleared away bacteria from an aluminum wire. He also found it did not damage blood corpuscles.

IDENTIFIED FUNGUS.

Sir Alexander identified the mold from its brush like appearance as belonging to the penicillium family of fungi. He named it penicillin and recorded his discovery in an official report in 1929.

Ten years passed before a pair of Oxford University researchers, Sir Howard Florey and Dr. Ernst Boris Chain, produced penicillin in the crystalline form which has made it one of the most potent drugs ever produced. It was perfected in time to save thousands of soldiers' lives from infection during World War II.



SIR ALEXANDER FLEMING
Shared 1945 Nobel Prize
—International News Soundphoto.