

PASSING OF LYMPHOLOGY PIONEERS AND PRESIDENTS: THE LEGACY OF TWO GENTLEMEN-SCHOLARS

2011 saw the passing of two ISL leaders both marked by their love of life, learning, and lymph.

For Alois Rüttimann, founder of the International Society of Lymphology (ISL) and its 1st President, the idea for the First ISL Congress in Zurich (as detailed in the tribute by the 2nd ISL President Manuel Viamonte, MD) was in his words “to build a bridge connecting the basic research with the clinics and moreover all medical specialties with one another. Why lymphology? The lymphatic system is a multipotent system of the human body ...which transports proteins and lipid, regulates heavy traffic of large molecules, organizes defense containing the intelligence service and police of the body in the lymph nodes, is an overflow system as a reserve of the circulatory system, but also the original site of malignant lymphoma and the pathway to carcinoma spread” (1). Clearly, Alois’ vision of the lymphatic system was of far more than “lymph nodes held together by strings,” forecasting the “hot topic” lymphology was to become a half century later.

For Charles Christopher O’Morchoe, 12th ISL President, a fundamental curiosity about lymphatic structure – including ultra-structure – and how this intricate architecture relates to specialized functions of the lymphatic system and the microcirculation impelled his basic research and inspired teaching. His lifelong collaboration with his wife, fellow lymphologist Patricia Jean O’Morchoe, made them one of the formidable “power couples” in lymphology. A tall, lanky, eloquent presence, Charles (Chris) was a towering figure also in his intellect, gentility,

humor, and magnanimity; he was a true mentor – “someone in whose presence you get great ideas.” He clearly saw the lymphatic system as a vasculature and a macro/microcirculation – its distinctiveness similarities, and complementation to the blood vasculature and circulation.

As we mourn their passing and reflect on the legacy they have left to our world of lymphology, both will be welcomed warmly into the ISL Celestial Chapter by those lymphology pioneers and Presidents who preceded them (2,3).

REFERENCES

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2. Witte, MH: Lingering thoughts on three lymphologists. Lymphology 31 (1998), 37-38.
3. Witte, MH: Celestial chapter of the International Society of Lymphology: Passing of pioneers. Lymphology 36 (2003), 150- 158.

Marlys H. Witte, MD
Secretary-General, ISL