

IN MEMORIAM**JACQUES AIME GRUWEZ****March 24, 1927-July 9, 2024****Vive le (ISL) Président!***Photos – Then and Recent*

It was a chilly March Day in 1973, in, as usual, sunny Tucson, Arizona. The 4th International Society of Lymphology was about to begin in the new Tucson Convention Center and the ISL Executive Committee was making final plans for the meeting at the home of Marlys (Congress Co-President) and Charles Witte. As third ISL President, Jacques Gruwez was the first to jump into their unearthened pool, as the assembled group cheered, “Vive le Président!” Indeed, his well-wishers foresaw the long and impactful life that he would lead, dedicated to his profession of surgery — (with both the hands and his intellect), his family, patients, students — and the birth and growth of the discipline and specialty of lymphology. On July 9, 2024, he joined that preponderance of ISL Presidents (e.g., founders Ruttimann, Viamonte, M Földi, and Dumont) who lived unusually long lives, some well into their 90’s.

As long time Professor and Head of

General Surgery at the Catholic University in Leuven, Belgium, he led internationally recognized programs, conducted wide-ranging clinical research (co-authoring more than 350 scientific papers and chapters), and mentored a retinue of young surgeons (including fellow lymphologist Antoon “Toni” Lerut) and other students, while impacting the lives of many patients including children with gastrointestinal and lymphatic disorders, particularly of the central lymphatic structures, such as chylous reflux syndromes. The latter were prominently featured in the early ISL Congresses and especially in the highly successful 3rd ICL, which he organized in Brussels in 1970 (1-4). Only recently has there been a return of the central lymphatic system, the final pathway of lymph drainage into the central blood circulation, to prominence and both surgical and non-surgical treatments (5-7).

Dr. Gruwez received many honors during his career, among them: Fellow of the

Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. His curricular innovations were recognized by incorporation into the European Board of Surgery, the Belgian Professional Surgical Association and other Belgian accreditation councils. A consummate “professional,” he joined others in railing against growing “surgical corporatism” (8).

A legend persists among ardent lymphologists, that immersing yourself in lymph (the elixir that ancients thought fills the vessels of the gods in contrast to blood that fills that of mere mortals) opens the path to the long sought after “fountain of youth.” The life of Jacques Gruwez, a dashing, brilliant, and charismatic figure in lymphology, is a testament to the legend.

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