

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

THOMAS A. GONDA (1921 – 1987)

Thomas A. Gonda, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Departmental Chairman, died suddenly August 12, 1987, at the age of 65.

A native of Vienna, Austria, he became a citizen of the United States in 1929. He received the A.B. and M.D. degrees from Stanford in 1942 and 1945, joined our faculty in 1953 in San Francisco, and thereafter served Stanford very well indeed. He was an Associate Dean of the School of Medicine from 1967 to 1974, and concurrently, Director of the Stanford University Hospital (1968-74). In 1974 Doctor Gonda became Professor and Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry, and in 1986 the Howard C. Robbins Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, continuing as Chairman of the department. He was due to retire 18 days after the date of his death.

In retrospect, the late 1960's needed wise psychiatrists in high places at Stanford and elsewhere. Tom was the ideal person to direct our hospital then, especially as it was a new entity following the University's purchase of the Palo Alto share of the previously jointly owned institution. Student unrest and turmoil during the war in Vietnam did not spare the Medical Center, and it was most fortunate that Tom was our leader in deflecting the youthful wrath of that period. His department had set up a committee on violence the day after Robert F. Kennedy died in 1968, and that committee's task force presented a Symposium on Violence at the Medical Center on November 16, 1968. Tom was a participant, and provided a preamble to a series of relevant papers published a few months later in the Stanford M.D. magazine.

Medical jurisprudence was another area that attracted Doctor Gonda's interest, leading him in 1983 to chair the Medical Center Ethics Committee. Among other things, he and his group developed guidelines to clarify the circumstances under which human organs and tissues may be donated for transplantation and other medical purposes. These interests led him and his student-colleague John Ruark to write "Dying Dignified: The Health Professional's Guide to Care", called the outstanding book for nurses by Nursing '84 magazine, and "book of the year" by the American Journal of Nursing; it received an American Medical Writers Association Award. His portion of the dedication was to his wife Elizabeth, his children Paul, William, and Lynn, and their families, to all of whom he was devoted.

When Doctor Gonda stepped down in 1974 from his post as Director of Stanford University Hospital, its employees created an award that is presented annually; the recipient is designated the Thomas A. Gonda Hospital Employee of the Year. At this time he became Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry, which he guided in a decade of achievement. In this period the department became recognized internationally for its mental health clinical research center, for the sleep disorders program, and for the program in behavioral medicine. Under his leadership the department also expanded its basic science research activities, and developed areas of child psychiatry.

Doctor Gonda was honored by the American Psychiatric Association in 1983 with a Life Fellowship Medal, and by the Northern California Psychiatric Society with its outstanding Achievement Award (1984) reserved for Society members "who have made outstanding contributions to psychiatry and who have earned the respect of their colleagues and the community." Tom certainly richly deserved this encomium. But he was, as well, a wise and warm man who was generally beloved, a splendid teacher and counsellor, a solid psychiatrist, and a devoted family man. We are indeed sorry to lose him.

David A. Rytand (Chair)
W. Stewart Agras
Sidney Raffel