

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

LELLAND JOSEPH RATHER (1913 – 1989)

Lelland Joseph Rather, Professor Emeritus, Department of Pathology, Stanford University School of Medicine, was born at College Station, Texas, December 22, 1913 and died of lung cancer on July 6, 1989 in Sonoma, California. After obtaining his A.B., John Hopkins University (1934), M.S. in Biochemistry, University of Chicago (1936) and M.D., John Hopkins Medical School (1939), he became House Officer in Pediatrics, Children's Hospital, Philadelphia (1939-40), in Surgery, Duke University Hospital, Durham, N.C. (1940-41) and Assistant Resident, Pathology, Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit (1941-42). During World War II he served in the U.S. Medical Corps, Captain Air Force, Pacific Area (1942-46), after which he joined the Pathology Department, Stanford University Medical School: Teaching Assistant (1946), Instructor (1946-48), Assistant Professor (1949-51), Associate Professor (1951-57), Professor (1957-76), and Emeritus (1976-89). He was appointed Curator of the Historical Section of Stanford's Lane Medical Library. He served as Consultant, Surgeon General's Office (1948-53) and was elected Diplomat, American Board of Pathology. He was a member of the American Association of Pathology and Bacteriology, American Association of the History of Medicine, International Academy of the History of Medicine, and the History of Science Society.

Dr. Rather's experimental research in pathology was chiefly in the area of protein resorption by the kidney tubule and renal hypertension, but it also included cardiac hypertrophy, testicular atrophy, cirrhosis, and cell-nucleus size in various conditions. In addition to the extensive publications of his research and reviews, he achieved world-wide recognition for his works in the history of medicine, ideas, and culture, that he pursued to the very end.

His books are: *Disease, Life and Man* (Essays by Rudolf Virchow, selected, translated, annotated, and introduced), 1958. *Mind and Body in 18th Century Medicine: A Study Based on Jerome Gaub's De regimine mentis*, 1965. *The Therapeutic Power of the Word in Classical Antiquity* (an edited translation from the Spanish with John Sharp of the work of Pedro Lain-Entralgo, with an introduction by Rather), 1970. *Addison and the White Corpuscles: An Aspect of Nineteenth Century Biology*, 1972 (for which he received the Welch Medal in 1976 from the American Association for the History of Medicine with the statement....."but also in recognition of his significant earlier work on Virchow"). *The Genesis of Cancer, A Study in the History of Ideas*, 1978. *The Dream of Self-Destruction: Wagner's Ring and the Modern World*, 1979. *Rudolf Virchow: Collected Essays on Public Health and Epidemiology*, 2 Vols., edited 1985. *Johannes Mueller and the Nineteenth Century Origins of Tumor Cell Theory*, (with Patricia Rather and John B. Frerichs), 1986. *Rudolf Virchow, Letters to his Parents 1839-1864*, 1989. Two books to appear posthumously are, *A Commentary on the Medical Writings of Rudolf Virchow*, based on Schwalbe's *Virchow Bibliographie 1843-1901*. (Norman Publishing Co., 1989) and *Reading Wagner: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Louisiana State University Press, 1990). Another book, *Ice Cream Cone Economics*, dealing with price changes of commodities from the Middle Ages to the present, and using the cost of an ice cream cone as an index in more modern times, had not yet found a publisher.

Dr. Rather was a man of high integrity, unbending in his support of those principles he held important for the welfare of the country and of mankind. He made close and lasting

friendships with a surprisingly diverse group of individuals who, like himself, took seriously the responsibility of their commitments. He had flown over Nagasaki about a week after the A-bombing and years later recounted how the view from a few hundred feet had clarified for him the meaning of the term "war crimes". In the 1950's he lived in North Beach during the Beatnik era, forming a lifelong association with the poet Kenneth Rexroth. In 1967-68 he was jailed twice for antiwar civil disobedience activities and shared the experience with his daughter, Patricia, and a lifelong friend, and a fellow anti-war advocate, Ira Sandlperl. And although his leanings in later life were toward a cynical distrust of government, he engaged in spirited political discussions on these issues with his friend, the late Sidney Hook.

On April 10, 1987, the Stanford Medical School established a generous endowment, in Dr. Rather's name, for the collection of books in the history of medicine and natural sciences at Lane Medical Library. As an inscription he chose a quote from Terentianus Maurus ... "Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli," translated by him, "The fate of a book depends on the understanding of its reader." He sketched out a design for a bookplate that was executed by Stanford calligraphist and chemist, Eric Hutchinson, showing Hermes and Hippocrates, representatives of Chemistry and Medicine, respectively, shaking hands. There, together, were encapsulated both his ideas concerning the roots of modern medicine and his reflections on the nature of immortality.

He was a most unusual scholar, both a true classicist and a modernist, whose interests extended in depth to music (he was also an accomplished pianist), literature, languages, art and even motion pictures, in addition to the medicine, history, philosophy, and economics that were the subjects of his writings-- a truly rare person with a subtle sense of humor to season all.

To many of us the examples of his uncompromising integrity and intellectual rigor are indeed remarkable. In the last year of his life, knowing that lung cancer had doomed him, he retired to Sonoma to finish his writings, and to be near his daughter, co-traveler, and collaborator, Patricia, and her family. He was, in his own words, a nonbeliever whose attitude toward death was expressed by Lucretius - in translation, "Death is therefore nothing whatsoever to us, it concerns us not a whit, since we hold that mind too is mortal." Nevertheless, on the day of his death, he took Patricia aside and said, "Well, until we meet again." To which she replied, "I thought you didn't believe in an afterlife," to which he replied, "I don't. "

Dr. Rather gave much to Stanford, and was still underutilized for teaching beyond that in pathology. Those who were fortunate enough to know and appreciate his many facets will miss him particularly, and his indelible mark will remain on many others who were his students and colleagues.

Dr. Rather is survived by his children with his first wife, Eleanor Edith Knight: Patricia Rather Taylor, her son and daughter of Sonoma, Leland Rather of San Francisco, and Noel Rather of Pullman, Washington, and his brothers, John Rather of Kensington, Maryland, and James B. Rather of Winter Harbor, Maine.

David Glick, Chair
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