Obituary

Dr. R. M. Mason

Dr. Richard Michael Mason died on Thursday June 30, 1977, while attending the 14th International Congress of Rheumatology in San Francisco. The world lost one of its great rheumatologists; Britain, a distinguished leader in the discipline; and all rheumatologists, a good friend.

After early years in India where his father, Sir Lawrence Mason, was Inspector General of Forests, Dr. Mason was educated at Marlborough and Christ Church, Oxford. He graduated BM, BCh in 1942, having trained at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London. His MA followed in 1943, the DM in 1953, and FRCP in 1962.

After service with the RAF during the invasion of Germany and the liberation of Denmark, he returned to St. Bartholomew's Hospital as a medical registrar in 1947. Shortly after, he joined Dr. Oswald Savage in the rheumatology department of the West London Hospital and became senior

registrar to the late W. S. C. Copeman, who initiated his involvement with the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council at this time.

His first consultant post was to the Chase Farm Hospital, London in 1948. He joined the staff of the London Hospital in 1957 in the department of physical medicine and rheumatology. Other appointments included those of physician in rheumatic diseases to the King Edward VII Hospital for Officers, honorary consultant to Osborne House, Isle of Wight, consultant to the Royal Masonic Hospital, and consultant in rheumatology to the Royal Air Force. He was visiting guest professor at the Royal North Shore Hospital of Sydney in 1962 and was again visiting professor for World Rheumatism Year in Australia earlier this year.

Dr. Mason made major contributions to rheumatology in many areas. He conducted the Heberden's Round on the subject of Behçet's syndrome in 1967.

His reasonable counsel prevailed in establishing a good relationship between the disciplines of physical medicine and rheumatology. His leadership of the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council as chairman of the executive committee from 1972 to his death resulted in progressive growth in support for research. Under his guidance, the amount of money raised and made available rose from £½m to £2m annually. His great personal appeal cemented close ties between rheumatologists throughout the world, especially between Europe and Australasia. Encouragement and assistance for young rheumatologists were constantly his concern and many of the younger members of our specialty have good reason to be grateful to him. Among his many contributions to the literature, his writing in Copeman's *Textbook of Rheumatic Diseases* and his contribution as a co-author in *An Introduction to Clinical Rheumatology*, which has now been translated into many languages, stand out for their clarity and understanding.

Despite all his success, he remained simple, true, and trustworthy. His personal charm and whimsical humour endeared him to everybody he met and he was able to express this warmth of character on a public platform or through the media with very telling effect on public relations. He was a devoted,

happy family man. He lived for his wife, Heather, and she for him. His son, John, a PhD from Cambridge, his daughter, Lynch, an occupational therapist, and their families have always been intimately involved in family activities of sailing in Palu and skiing in Europe and Australia. He played squash for the RAF during the war but this and mountaineering were curtailed by an illness in 1967, and although qualified as a pilot in the Oxford University Air Squadron before the war he had not flown for many years.

There was indeed a man, distinguished in his career and loved and respected by all whom he met, gentle yet of great strength; a friend with rare qualities and great personal appeal; a colleague with a keen mind, dedicated to his duties, and with a sympathy, understanding, and concern for the young; a thinker, teacher, and writer who inspired many.

One of his often-stated ambitions was to live to see the discovery of the cause and cure of rheumatoid arthritis. Sadly, this was not to be, but through his forethought, drive, and enthusiasm, he helped plant the seeds and provide the substance through which this ambition will be realized.

R. G. ROBINSON