

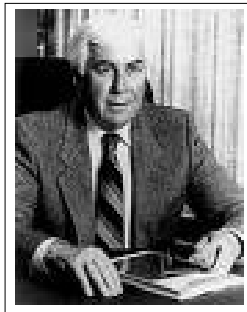
## A brilliant cardiologist and spiritual mentor: Jeremy Swan (1922–2005)

Harold James Charles Swan, better known today as Jeremy Swan, was born in 1922 in the relatively small town Sligo on Ireland's west coast. Both his parents were physicians and thus entering medical school was a most natural step for him.

After graduation in 1945 from the University of London, he served in the Royal Air Force, and interestingly enough he became the director of a military hospital — in central Iraq. He started as a research associate in London and in 1949 published his first paper (on the action of noradrenaline on the human circulation, in *Lancet*) and received his PhD degree in 1951 under the tutorship of H.H. Dale.

Jeremy Swan was awarded a prestigious fellowship from the Mayo Clinic and immigrated to the US in 1955. From that year on, he was on the staff of the Mayo Clinic, closely collaborating with Dr. Earl Wood, head of Cardiology there, whom he always affectionately called his “teacher and mentor”. His interest was the physiology and pathophysiology of the cardiovascular system, using the knowledge derived from cardiac catheterizations, introducing the so-called “dye-dilution” method for cardiac output and flow-measurements, for quantifications of intracardiac shunts, etc. He also pioneered and refined the use of cine-cardioangiography, especially in congenital heart conditions and his work “Pulmonary Hypertension in Congenital Heart Disease” became a classic. His contributions during his “Mayo-period” to our understanding of cardiac disease were enormous and the over 100 publications written over the span of his 14 years at Mayo, are a joy to be reread even today by connoisseurs of classic cardiology literature.

At this stage of his career Jeremy Swan had several offers from leading American cardiovascular centers to become Chief of their Cardiac Units. Jeremy chose the offer of the relatively small



Jewish Hospital in Los Angeles, the Cedars of Lebanon, at the time not very well-known and academically not respected. When at a later stage of his life I asked him about this choice, he only smiled and gave no verbal answer. I told him “you must have acted upon the advice expressed in the old Jewish proverb: Don't expect to be honored because of a 'place', you are the man who will bring honor to the 'place' “. Indeed, with Jeremy Swan, Cedars of Lebanon's cardiology flourished and became an internationally renowned center for treating, teaching and research. The newly gained prestige of his hospital paved the way for its subsequent merger with the other and larger Jewish Hospital in the city, creating what we know today as the excellent Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.

As Director of Cardiology at Cedars-Sinai, Jeremy moved from physiological research to clinical cardiology and clinical investigations on cardiovascular diseases. His division became one of the leading centers in the world, training generations of outstanding cardiologists, providing excellent patient care and producing research that enriched our knowledge of cardiology. It would be an injustice to only quote among Swan's scientific contributions the introduction of the “Swan-Ganz Catheter” (with William Ganz), without mentioning all the other groundbreaking and innovative contributions in the field of chronic coronary and valvular disease, the treatment of acute coronary syndromes, intensive cardiac care, etc. During his 22 years at Cedars-Sinai Swan with his colleagues published over 300 investigations.

Jeremy's purest ethical principles, highest moral standards and personal integrity were like a torch leading the way and illuminating the path not only for his staff and co-workers but for all of us. He wrote: “Complex and unresolved ethical issues confront the present-day physician... we are

bound to use considered ethical principles derived from our past as evidence for our future. These principles... can provide the physician guidance in the moral, ethical, and legal dilemmas, which face him in the future" [1].

Jeremy Swan had deep Irish roots. He loved Irish tradition, literature, and music and loved the places "imbued with the mysteries of Celtic mythology", as written about him by Davis Coakly [2]. During his frequent trips to his homeland he was often accompanied by his family, proudly showing them the places and the scenery of his childhood, enjoying together the music, and reading together Irish poetry. Among the numerous honors bestowed upon him, he was most proud of those conferred upon him by his Irish homeland, by its Cardiac Society and its Royal College of Physicians.

Above all, Jeremy Swan was a deeply spiritual person, rooted in Christianity, a man who came to his faith through his intellectual, analytical and scientific mind. Born into a Catholic family, he joined the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood with his second wife Roma, after their marriage in 1973, attending services regularly. "He began to understand the connection between the Old and New Testament", according to Roma, "and solidified his faith and commitment with Rev. Ralph Osborne, one of his pastors. Jeremy became involved in several Couples Bible Study Groups where his intellectually searching mind and his personal faith came together in exciting discussions" [3].

I met Jeremy frequently — when I was in Los Angeles, at various international meetings and also during his many trips to Israel. I recall one unforgettable evening with Jeremy and Roma, during one of their journeys to Israel, with their Pastor Rev. Osborne. We were sitting in my home in Jerusalem, discussing the common roots of Judaism and Christianity, the moral values these two great religions share and the meaning of Jerusalem as the Holy City for both of us. Jeremy expressed his concern that Israel does not fully appreciate its own history and

should not forget its spiritual mission in this world. Roma, Rev. Osborne and myself have recently refreshed our memories about that evening, when we spent several hours talking, without one word about medicine or science, only about the values and ideas we share [3, 4].

Jeremy enjoyed a warm family life, that was shattered by the early death of his youngest daughter Katherine, herself a doctor, of cancer at the age of 32. Jeremy wrote about this tragic event... "my deceased daughter, Katherine... has been with me every day of my life since her death three years ago. There is a Hebrew word for the sorrow of a parent on the death of a child. It has a meaning beyond sadness and pain and it indicates an unbearable loss".

In retirement Jeremy mainly spent his time in Pasadena California with his "rose, flower and vegetable garden" [5]. He suffered a stroke in 2001, which changed his life but not his speech or mental capacity and above all, not his spirit. In his wheelchair he traveled again to his beloved Ireland with Roma and his daughter, Dodie, and remained actively himself, even mentoring young Doctors in his home until the last two weeks of his life. He died at Cedars-Sinai following complications of a heart attack. According to his wishes his ashes were brought back to Sligo, the city of his birth.

His beloved Roma, his six surviving children, grandchildren and a great-granddaughter, his friends, colleagues and cardiologists all over the world whom he mentored, all pledge to keep Jeremy Swan's memory alive.

## References

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