

IN MEMORIAM
Hymen Samuel Mayerson, A.B., Ph.D.
 1900-1985



Dr. H. S. Mayerson

The stimulus for the success of the International Society of Lymphology may be attributed to the gathering of lymphologists at the conference on Lymph and the Lymphatic System, December 12-14, 1965 in New Orleans, organized by Dr. Mayerson. The conference was sponsored by Tulane University and the Committee on Shock of the National Research Council. Among the participants were such notables as Courtice, Foldi, Kinmonth, Good, Dumont, Sampson, Howard, Simeone and Strauli. Some of the participants and those in attendance were Founders and on the Executive Committee of the Society. This was a few months after

Dr. Mayerson's 40 year career at Tulane had culminated in his becoming Emeritus. He remained vigorous and enthusiastic in his next position as Associate Director of Touro Infirmary for almost 10 years.

In 1925, he obtained his Ph.D. from Yale under Professor Henry Laurens, and a year later followed him to Tulane University in New Orleans. For the next 20 years, he ascended the ivy ladder, succeeding Professor Laurens as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Physiology at Tulane in 1945. During the first of these years (1926-1936), he assessed the effects of light, radiation and darkness on blood pressure, cardiac output and metabolism.

The second phase of his research (1937-1950), on the effects of posture and of the forces of gravity, has maintained its importance in today's space age. I recall that as students of Dr. Mayerson, we were attached to kymographs and pedaled a stationary bicycle. Frequently those students with large legs blacked out as blood pooled in the lower extremities, whereas those of us who were skinny kept on pedaling. Dr. Mayerson's work of those days was supported by the armed services and used in testing the effects of "G" on pilots in World War II.

We are most familiar, however, with the third phase of Dr. Mayerson's scientific contributions, that of his studies on the lymphatic system. These were begun in 1951 after a discussion of "lost plasma" with a colleague at a coffee break. From then until his retirement, Dr. Mayerson, his faculty members and students contributed to the understanding of the passage of various sized molecules through the lymphatic vessel walls

and lymph nodes. Tangential to this work were contributions to the use of plasma expanders, notably dextrans of large molecular weight and size. Although he was called "The Poised Pipe Professor," he labelled himself a "lymphomaniac."

He once told me that during these years, he goaded his students into performing the "impossible," such as cannulation of a small lymphatic by challenging them that it could not be done. Many of his students went on to successful academic careers in physiology, cardiology, nephrology and lymphology.

Dr. Mayerson was a member and officer of numerous scientific organizations. In 1962 he revisited the city of his birth to receive an Honorary Doctor of Sciences from his Alma Mater, Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, where he had obtained his A.B. in 1922. He served as President of the American Physiological Society in 1962 and the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology; President of the Tulane Chapter of Sigma Xi and of the Tulane Chapter of the American Association of University Professors; Vice-President of the Louisiana Heart Association and of the New Orleans Academy of Sciences; on the Board

or Executive Council of the American Physiological Society, Louisiana Heart Association, the American Heart Association and as Chairman of its Council on Basic Sciences. He was on the Editorial Boards of CIRCULATION RESEARCH and PHYSIOLOGICAL REVIEWS. He served on committees of the National Research Council, the National Academy of Sciences, the National Board of Medical Examiners and the U.S. Public Health Service.

Among his numerous publications, one of which he was very proud, was "The Lymphatic System — in which the essential role of the body's second circulatory system is described" which appeared in SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, June 1963, explaining the lymphatic system to non-lymphologist.

Dr. Mayerson's contributions have extended far beyond his scientific publications, however. By his service on committees and his consultations, he provided the means for many to achieve their goals and through his teaching, he passed the torch to his students, instilling within them the desire and ability to make their contributions and to inspire others. This is the true meaning of immortality.

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