

ANDRÉ COURNAND, M.D.
1895-1988

André Cournand, M.D. died on February 19, 1988 at the age of 92. André had a long and distinguished career as a medical scientist, physician and as a humanist with broad interests in art, music and philosophy. He was a gentle and generous person who exhibited great concern for humankind and tremendous enthusiasm for life. He lived a graceful life.

André was born in France on September 24, 1895. His youth was spent in Paris where his father was a successful dentist. André attended the Sorbonne, obtaining his degree in 1913. He then entered medical school at the University of Paris but his education was interrupted by the need for medically trained personnel during World War I. He served in the French Army Medical Corps from 1915 to 1918, was wounded in the trenches in the last month of the war and spent the winter of 1918-9 recovering in a military hospital in Paris. He returned to the University of Paris Medical School in 1919, where he studied and worked as a resident in pediatrics, internal medicine, chest diseases and neurology until 1930, obtaining his M.D. degree in that year. Despite the demands of his medical training, André was engaged throughout this period in the rich cultural and intellectual life of Paris. He befriended many artists, writers and musicians in the Paris intellectual community and involved himself in the excitement and ferment surrounding evolving forms of art and music.

The 1920s were the period of André's most intense personal involvement in mountaineering. He had begun climbing in the French Alps with his father before the First World War and returned to the Alps to climb with his father and with his contemporaries in the post-war period. He became a skilled rock climber and led many excellent rock climbs in the Aiguilles above Chamonix, among them the Requin, the Index and the Grépon. His abilities and enthusiasm led to his acceptance as a member of the *Groupe de Haute Montagne* of the French Alpine Club. André achieved many honors during his life, but he referred to his membership in the *Groupe de Haute Montagne* with the special affection and pride that the mind reserves for the happiest adventures of youth. Although he did little climbing after 1930, he retained his enthusiasm for the mountains throughout his life. He joined the American Alpine Club in 1946. He attended the lectures and dinner meetings of the New York Section of the AAC until the last year of his life. He enjoyed talking about climbing and about contemporary mountaineering ethics and literature. Long after he was physically incapable of mountain travel, his spirit sought the adventure of the hills.

In 1930, at the age of 34, André decided to spend a year in postgraduate training in chest medicine in the United States, prior to entering medical practice. He came to New York, to the Chest Service of Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons at Bellevue Hospital. After a few months on the Chest Service, André was invited to remain in the United States to participate in a series of investigations on the influence of thoracic surgery and lung diseases on pulmonary physiology. He had done a bit of research in medical school in

France and was receptive to this invitation because "It was a new challenge that I thought would lead me to a more satisfying career based on full-time research, teaching and practice." In addition, he was intrigued by the possibility of working under the leadership of Dickinson Richards, a physician of his own age, whose personal and professional qualities of intelligence and excellence he admired. The partnership that André and Dickinson Richards formed developed into a rich and lifelong friendship between the two and led to major advances in cardiopulmonary physiology. In 1932 Cournand and Richards began a study of pulmonary gas exchange and of blood flow through the lungs which led them to develop the technique of cardiac catheterization in man. While they were not the first to catheterize the heart in a living human being (this was done in 1929 by Werner Forssmann, a German physician and subsequently by Ameuille and Hinault in Paris, from whom André Cournand obtained valuable advice), they were the first to develop a systematic plan for investigating the safety of this technique and its value in studying the circulation in normal and diseased states in man. From 1941 to 1945 Cournand reported successes in the catheterization of the right atrium, right ventricle and pulmonary artery in man. These seminal studies led to rapid advances in medical science, to a vastly improved understanding of the physiology of the heart and the lung, and to the popularization of cardiac catheterization as a widely applicable tool for the study and treatment of diseases of the heart and lungs. For this work, André was internationally recognized. He received the Lasker Award in 1950 and shared the 1956 Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology with Richards and Forssmann. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences of the United States and to the French National Academies of Sciences and Medicine; and he received honorary degrees from the Universities of Strasbourg, Lyon, Brussels, Pisa, Brazil, Nancy, Birmingham and from Columbia University. André took great pride in the many students and fellows who trained in his laboratory and who went on to distinguished careers of their own. He mentioned them often and delighted in their work and success.

André retired from active research in 1964. For the last 25 years, he devoted himself to the role of senior statesman of science, to studying the relationship of science to society and to the development of the "prospective" philosophical concepts of the French philosopher and educator, Gaston Berger. Characteristic of his good fortune throughout his life, he was able to share the last thirteen years of it with Dr. Beatrice Berle, his third wife, whose vibrant personality and enthusiasm for new adventures, for people of all ages, and for French culture enriched and rivaled his own. They welcomed old friends and new acquaintances to their homes in Great Barrington, Massachusetts and in New York City and stimulated them all with good food, wine and company. Though in failing health for much of the last year of his life, André retained his sense of humor and proportion. He had lived a very full and satisfying life. He died at peace with himself, surrounded by those he loved.

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