

Thorax (1954), 9, 173.

JOHN ALEXANDER

In the death of John Alexander, of Ann Arbor, U.S.A., thoracic surgery has suffered a great loss. He died in July, ironically enough from a condition quite unrelated to the disease which had been a constant companion and burden to him for more than a quarter of a century.

No one meeting him would know, except by previous knowledge, that he suffered from tuberculosis, and certainly only if one were intimate with him would the slightest hint be given that such was the case.

His disease was widespread, involving the spinal column, the genito-urinary tract, and the lungs. The first edition of his book was written when he was lying on his back with spinal caries, using a periscopic mirror for the purpose. During the latter years of his life one kidney had practically ceased to function, and the other had a ureterostomy.

Despite all this, he gathered around him a school of young surgeons and physicians, who will continue to bear and pass on the impress of John Alexander. He radiated friendliness; his entry into a room was immediately remarked, and he filled the room, as it were, with a rich fragrance.



At each meeting of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery at which he was present, and it was rare for him to miss these meetings, his "boys" gave him a luncheon party. It was an inspiring sight to see these 40 or so surgeons, distinguished in their own right, doing honour and paying tribute to their Chief, a tribute he accepted as modestly as a father does that of his own family.

It is a remarkable thing that John Alexander, who unfortunately for us never visited Great Britain, commanded as equal a degree of respect and admiration over here as he received in his own

country, and for those of us who were privileged to meet him he certainly equally inspired our affection.

He was truly a great man, with all a great man's qualities—courage, unbounded cheerfulness in all circumstances, the ability to command an unfailing loyalty in all those who came within the sphere of his influence, the faculty for hard work and application, and withal a breadth of vision sufficient to see what is

important and the ability to communicate his views to others.

His contribution to the surgery of tuberculosis will long be remembered, but it is doubtful whether it will be remembered for a longer time than will be his courage, great humanity, and his devotion to his self-appointed task.

American thoracic surgeons will miss his wise counsel and encouragement, and we, in this country, will share their loss. C. P. T.



John Alexander

C. P. T.

Thorax 1954 9: 173-174

doi: 10.1136/thx.9.3.173

Updated information and services can be found at:

<http://thorax.bmj.com/content/9/3/173.citation>

These include:

Email alerting service

Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Notes

To request permissions go to:

<http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions>

To order reprints go to:

<http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform>

To subscribe to BMJ go to:

<http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/>