

## IN MEMORIAM

DR. A. W. S. THEVATHASAN

Dr. Arthur Wesley Sugunaratnam was born in Ceylon in 1913 and was brought by his parents at an early age to Singapore. He was educated at the Anglo-Chinese School and carried out his medical studies at the King Edward VII College of Medicine. From the beginning he made his mark. One of his teachers said in 1931 that the general intellectual level and outlook of new entrants had gone up considerably and quoted only one example to prove his point—Arthur Thevathasan. Time has shown how accurate was his prophecy of the greatness which Arthur would achieve. In the wards he was leader of the student group. His keenness to learn, his intellectual integrity and his clarity of thought provided a powerful stimulus to colleagues and teachers alike. He was so outstanding a Secretary of the Medical College Union that almost immediately after graduation he was persuaded to become Secretary of the Alumni Association, and within a few months he spoke eloquently at the Annual Dinner of the Association. He was responsible for drafting a letter to the Maclean Commission on Higher Education showing cause why there should be a University established in Singapore and stating how it could be financed.

He was lecturer in Anatomy between graduation and the outbreak of War when the College was dismantled and he was forced to seek a living elsewhere. He naturally went into private practice. When some time afterwards he was asked how he liked private practice he said he found it so satisfying that he would never want to practise any other aspect of medicine. He found it spiritually and emotionally satisfying because he was able to serve suffering humanity directly. He was an ideal practitioner of medicine. He took infinite pains over every aspect of his patients' welfare. To him, in the practice of medicine the patient came first, the patient came second, the patient came last—nothing else mattered. When he died so many of his patients wept and felt completely lost as if they were in a rudderless boat.

He was, if not the only one, certainly the first in this country to obtain his M.R.C.P.

London without ever having worked in a hospital. Furthermore, he obtained the Membership at the first attempt within seven months of landing in the United Kingdom. He maintained a continuing interest in the academic side of medicine and taught clinical medicine for several years.

He rendered much public service. He was foremost in the councils of the Alumni Association and the British Medical Association. He was President of the Medical Council of Singapore and for his long and distinguished service to the University of Malaya (later University of Singapore) he was awarded the LL.D. Hon. Causa. His contribution to the Red Cross Society, Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association and other public bodies was recognized by the award of the O.B.E. He was one of the most inspired leaders of Rotary and he died immediately after he had delivered his speech as Vice-President of the Rotary International at a dinner held in Singapore to honour the President of Rotary International.

One would have imagined that a man so fully occupied with professional work and public service would have no time for any sports or hobbies. The reverse was the case. In his early days he was an excellent hockey player and long distance runner. Later he was an orchid enthusiast, and a lover of classical music himself playing the cello with remarkable ability. He was a photographer—and finding this inadequate took to painting.

Hans Habe, the Hungarian writer in his masterpiece "Ilona", describes how when Prince Kontowski, Ilona's lifelong friend, died she read his obituary and was filled with anger because so much had been said about his public service and nothing about the Man—the man whom Ilona knew to be the kindest, the wisest, the most loving and suffering human being she had known. So also Arthur's family and friends would be very hurt if I had stopped at the last paragraph. Arthur was indeed the wisest, the kindest, the most loving and suffering husband, father, friend.

B. R. Sreenivasan

## DR. V. THAMBIPILLAI

The death of Dr. V. Thambipillai, the Senior Lecturer in Anatomy in the University of Singapore, has removed a familiar and popular figure from our midst. Born in Ceylon, Dr. Thambipillai entered the King Edward VII College of Medicine for his medical studies. After graduation in 1936 he had a varied experience as House Surgeon, General Medical Officer, Tutor in Bacteriology and Assistant Curator of Keith Museum before entering on his career as a teacher of Anatomy for medical and dental students in his Alma mater.

He shunned publicity and public appearance preferring to devote himself to the routine running of a chronically under-staffed department and to the patients and painstaking training of students. By bringing the wide background knowledge he had gained in the wards of the hospitals to his teaching, he made Anatomy a living and interesting subject. Many a doctor in the country today looks back with gratitude for the help he has received from Dr. Thambipillai, especially in the understanding of the difficult aspects of neurology, genetics, and embryology.

Dr. Thambipillai won the Liew Weng Chee Scholarship which enabled him to work for a

Diploma in Physical Anthropology at Oxford. He worked on skeletal maturation and on factors causing scoliosis in school children.

Dr. Thambipillai was a staunch worker for the Alumni Association and as Hon. Treasurer for many years helped to raise funds for the putting up of the Alumni Medical Centre at College Road and the Association Endowment Fund. He was keenly interested in sports and identified himself closely with the activities of the Student's Athletic Union and the Ceylon Sports Club. As Master of the Dunearn Road Hostels for the last ten years he proved himself to be a sympathetic and kindly mentor ever ready to help students in difficulties but hardly ever resorting to strong disciplinary action.

Dr. Thambipillai had no pretensions about him but was a humble and simple man much liked by everyone who came in contact with him. He leaves behind his widow and four children, one of whom is following his father's footsteps and is now a clinical student at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Singapore. We convey our sincere condolences to his family in their bereavement.

A. A. S.

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