

Obituary

British Heart Journal, 1970, 32, 559–560.

Evan Jones

Members of the British Cardiac Society have lost a distinguished and popular colleague in the death on 20 September 1969 of Evan Jones.

Evan was born in 1907 and was educated at Towyn County School, Wales. He received his medical education at St. Thomas' Hospital, graduating M.B., B.S. in 1931 and taking the Conjoint diploma in the same year. Evan was known and loved by many generations of St. Thomas' students. His academic record was remarkable. He won the William Tite scholarship, the Peacock scholarship, the Mead medal, the Haddon prize, the Toller prize, the Wainwright prize, and the Perkins Fellowship; a record which has probably never been equalled. He worked his way through the usual junior and then more senior appointments, becoming a member of the staff at the age of 30, and was therefore one of the youngest members of the staff ever appointed. He took the M.R.C.P. in 1933, proceeded M.D. in 1937, and was elected F.R.C.P. in 1941.

It was a fortunate day for St. Thomas' Hospital when a Welsh boy by the name of Evan Jones, newly up from school in Cardiganshire, saw the hospital from Westminster Bridge and decided that it was to be the hospital for him. Subsequently as a student, as well as winning the prizes already listed, he demonstrated the skill at games which had already led to his playing cricket for Glamorgan, and in these ways impressed his personality upon a hospital more used to Oxbridge in general and the Hawks' Club tie in particular.

He passed the examination for M.R.C.P. two years after qualification and in the 'clinical' surprised his examiner by correctly diagnosing a previously unrecognized carcinoma of a pharyngeal pouch, in addition to the luetic aortic incompetence with which the patient had troubled generations of examinees.

After a time as Resident Assistant Physician at St. Thomas' he was appointed R.M.O. at the National Heart Hospital, where perhaps his main contribution was to detect disorders



masquerading as cardiovascular disease, a skill which his senior colleagues learnt at first to tolerate and then to admire. He was preceded as R.M.O. by Paul Wood and followed by Sharpey-Schafer. Whereas Sharpey-Schafer and Paul Wood were to make their mark on the cardiological world map, for Evan Jones it was to be a life of clinical medicine and teaching, in both of which he excelled. His skill in clinical medicine was compounded of a variety of ingredients. First, perhaps an ability to convey to the patient a genuine concern and a feeling of having found a doctor totally committed to solving the problem. Second, a technique in history taking whereby he seemed to know what the patient was trying to describe better than the patient did. Third, by an ability to add significant abnormal physical signs which others had missed. On these foundations and with the accurate recall of similar cases from a growing and latterly vast experience, and with ruthless logic, the diagnosis was reached. He was seldom proved wrong. There seemed something of Celtic magic about his diagnostic skill and to the wonder which it often evoked was frequently added a delight that one so well endowed should so often complain that 'medicine is too bloody difficult'.

The image of Evan – the name by which all knew him – reflects with vivid differences from his friends, but the features which recurred were his avidity for a problem and for taking responsibility; his preparedness to learn from anyone who had something worth while to teach, and his capacity for treating patients from all strata of society in the same way.

At St. Thomas' he carried more than his share of being doctor to doctors and their families. Innumerable GP friends blessed him for the strong constitution which allowed him to accept a request to go anywhere at any time. They knew that his opinion would be worth waiting for, to expect him when they saw him, and not to mind if it was late at night. Doctors, patients, and relatives alike were to learn in increasing numbers of the sense of relief from anxiety and responsibility when Evan Jones arrived. Evan had a great capacity for friendship with colleagues and

with patients and as he travelled round Britain to see patients, to attend the Cardiac Society Meetings, for golf, or for fishing, there were many stops to be made with old friends.

Evan Jones was the true general physician with a special interest, able to deal with most problems, and quick to call in those who knew better when this was needed. As the years went by his accuracy in diagnosis, his astonishing memory, and his intense humanity were to become a legend. As his reputation spread, the demands upon his time would have daunted two normal men. It was a matter for wonder that he managed to keep his batteries at full charge, though latterly he was much troubled with failing health. Fishing and music, and perhaps friendship most, were important; always at hand to care for him and his restlessness was his wife, Joan, who had learned in a remarkable way to cope with his erratic genius.

Michael B. Matthews