Harold G. Wolff (1898–1962)†

Harold G. Wolff, a founder-member of The Collegium Internationale Allergo-logicum, died in the Clinical Center of the National Institute of Health, Bethesda, Maryland on February twenty-first at the age of 63. His death came as a shock to his countless friends all over the world.

Dr. Wolff was born in New York City. He received a B. S. degree from the College of the City of New York in 1918, and M. D. from Harvard Medical School in 1923. He was also awarded an M. A. by Harvard University in 1928.

His post-graduate training was extensive and included: internal medicine at Roosevelt Hospital; neurology under Dr. Foster Kennedy at Bellevue and New York Hospitals; neurology and neuropathology with Dr. Stanley Cobb at Boston City Hospital and Harvard Medical School; psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Hospital under Dr. Adolph Meyer; and neuropharmacology at Graz, Austria. Since 1932 he was responsible for the development of neurology and, to a lesser extent, of psychiatry at Cornell University Medical College in its departments at New York Hospital and Bellevue Hospital. At the time of his death he was Anne Parrish Titzell Professor of Medicine (Neurology), and Associate Professor of Psychiatry. In these positions he was responsible for the training of young men, many of whom now hold professorial ranks in neurology, psychiatry, and internal medicine in universities in the United States and abroad.

His bibliography lists almost five hundred publications, including nine monographs. The range of his research activities was broad but he was especially noted for his work on the mechanism underlying headache and other pains, and his investigations on the relationship of mental and emotional factors to organic disease. It was his stimulating and provocative work in these fields that has laid the foundation for most of our recent clinical advances.

He received national and international distinction because of his contributions. He was President of the American Neurological Association in 1960-61; President of the Society for the Study of Human Ecology from 1955; and twice President of the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Diseases (1942 and 1949). He was an Honorary member of many medical societies in the United States and other countries and delivered numerous honorary lectures. He was Editor of several journals and texts, including the Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry, becoming Chief Editor of the Archives of Neurology when it was separated from psychiatry.

Dr. Wolff had a penetrating mind, was a meticulous worker and went directly to the heart of the problem under consideration. He demanded perfection in himself but, in many ways, was remarkably tolerant of the weaknesses of his colleagues. He was greatly respected by all for his integrity and intellect and revered by those who had the good fortune of working closely with him.

The medical profession and the Collegium have suffered a great loss which will be keenly felt by all. A. P. Friedman, New York, N. Y.
Dr. Rudolph Mayer, former Director of Microbiological Research for CIBA Pharmaceutical Company, died June 23rd of brain cancer at the National Institute of Health in Washington, D. C. Born in Colmar, France, in 1895, he received his M. D. degree in 1920 from the University of Freiburg. He was professor at the University of Breslau from 1925 until 1932. Then Dr. Mayer fled with his wife, Catherine, to Paris, where he became the Director of Microbiological Research for Rhone-Poulenc, a post he held until 1942. The occupation of France resulted in Dr. Mayer’s acceptance of aid from American friends and his entry into the United States. He directed microbiological research at CIBA Pharmaceutical Company from 1943 to 1960. Afterwards, until the time of his death, he was a staff member of the Leonard Wood Memorial Fund for the Eradication of Leprosy in the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology.

Dr. Mayer was a universally recognized authority on antihistamines and allergies. From 1921 to the present, his 250 original articles and monographs encompass an unusually wide span and variety of practical and fundamental advances. Upon assuming his duties at Summit in 1943, Dr. Mayer promptly initiated a search for an effective and relatively safe antihistamine. In 1946, the 63rd of many compounds synthesized by CIBA research chemists in this project proved to be very effective and, after laboratory evaluation, it was chosen for clinical trial. This discovery became the widely known and used anti-allergenic, Pyribenzamine.

Another important contribution with which Dr. Mayer was concerned while with CIBA was the discovery in the 1950’s of the excellent antituberculous activity of a new class of compounds, from which there resulted the most modern of antileprosy drugs, Ciba-1906.

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Rudolph Mayer’s scientific mind is credited with these two major discoveries, but his imagination and tireless energy brought other scientific advances. He developed new antibacterial relatives, and he demonstrated that quinone structures are common denominators in sensitization to dye intermediates. The fields of industrial medicine, occupational diseases, and cancer genesis were also enriched by Dr. Mayer’s discoveries. His works on the chemotherapy of
tuberculosis, tetanus, streptococci, staphylococci, and fungus infections produced leads indicating new and valuable treatment agents.

Dr. Mayer’s professional accomplishments were attested to by his membership in many learned societies, among them The Royal Society of Medicine, the American Academy of Allergy, the American Society for Microbiology, the Mycological Society of America, Society for Investigative Dermatology and the Collegium Internationale Allergologicum.

His interests were as fruitful and varied as his scientific research activities. An expert linguist, he travelled widely and wrote a number of articles about his trips. He was considered an authority on French history. Dr. Mayer was a discriminating collector; it was his collection of fine etchings and prints which led to his taking up painting himself, a hobby which resulted in an exhibition of his own work in Maine.

Dr. Mayer had a refreshing continental flair and the integrity, loyalty and gusto that deflated pomp. Inclined himself to underestimate the contributions he had made to science and the courageous example he offered to others, Dr. Mayer was, and his memory will be, held in high esteem by his colleagues and everyone else who had the privilege of knowing him.    James P. Donnelly