

Speech Given at the Unveiling of Professor Lars Thorén's Portrait

Martin H:son Holmdahl

Professor of Anaesthesiology, Rector of the University of Uppsala

On his retirement. Lars Thorén has held the professorship in surgery for 23 years. Before him Olle Hultén had performed this duty in an admirable manner for an equally long period. This was during the time that Lars, who as early as the Autumn term surgery course of 1944 had decided on a career in surgery, was also preparing himself for the professorship. When Lars had made up his mind to do something, then he does it. We, his then fellow medical students realized this right from the beginning. Such awareness in others could have been perceived as careerism, but not in the case of Lars. In him we saw a respectable bulldog phenomenon: decent and popular with an energy that could move mountains. The most reassuring trait was Lars' tremendous interest in the task. It characterized his achievements not only when he, earlier than anyone else, attained great surgical experience under his father-in-law Sölve Richter, but also as an established professor. Nobody can find such pleasure in a technically difficult operative challenge, at any time of the day or night, as Lars. And no one can show such readiness to help colleagues in a quandary.

Lars' ability to systematize knowledge became apparent to his friends even in his student days. It manifested itself in his attractive lecture notes, exceptional anatomy and pathology demonstrations, and, for generations of medical students and colleagues, in his well-known book on fluid balance and his membership of Drug Information Limited. His industriousness, good judgement and enormous store of knowledge have made him one of the central figures of Swedish surgery, and of the whole of the medical profession. His chairmanship of the Swedish Society of Medicine and the post as chief editor of Acta Chirurgica Scandinavica are further proof of this.

If one then adds that he gained the undivided admiration and gratitude of both his patients and staff, in a manner rarely to be met with, then it is evident that Lars Thorén's almost quarter of a century of surgical leadership will always be mentioned with respect. His interest in surgical science has already been eloquently spoken of. His own accomplishments and the doctoral theses produced by the department are many and significant, as can be seen in today's

programme. If one was to mention but a few of the edifices of knowledge to which Lars Thorén has contributed a building-block. these would be:

the effect of breathing exercise
biliary peritonitis
shock, fluid balance and permeability
parathyroid gland studies.

Let me also add joint studies on tetanus treatment, not because we supplied so much knowledge, but because they were a contributory factor behind Olle Hultén's recommendation that we should have an intensive care unit.

I consider it a privilege, here, to be allowed to express the gratitude of his colleagues. Lars and I met in June 1942 during military service when Lars had already read one year of medicine. Since then our friendship has deepened over nearly half a century. We were inaugurated as professors at the same time. Our relation, and, I venture to say, our mutual respect, has certainly been of value in the duties that we have been given. At the department our common interest in pathophysiology will certainly be pursued by our successors Ulf Haglund and Lars Wiklund, who gave two of the opening speeches of today's ceremonies.

Dear Lars, on behalf of the University, the Faculty of Medicine and your colleagues, I would like to thank you for a consummate achievement. You have been, and are, a good person, a good friend, an excellent doctor, a skilful surgeon, and a stimulating leader and colleague. You are going to be active, for many years we hope, not least of all in the study of the development of medicine, that which you have had the privilege of being a part of. In addition you have to keep fit for the continuation of our forty-year old tradition, the Saturday hour of tennis.

And now to my task: we are now going to see how the artist Bertram Schmitterlöw, who we have the pleasure of seeing here today with his wife and daughter, has succeeded in making something beautiful from his raw materials. But let me say that it is enough if he has managed to preserve Lars Thorén's vivid interest in surgery, his colleagues and patients, for posterity. The Department of Surgery receives herewith a completed series of portraits of professors of surgery, from Adolf Murray, 1774-1805, Jakob Åkerman, Henrik Romansson, Carl Henrik Bergstrand, Olof Glas (who changed over to Professor of Medicine), Carl Benedict Mesterton, Karl Gustaf Lennander, Johan Gustaf Ekehorn, Gustaf Petrén, Gunnar Nyström, and Olle Hultén. to Lars Thorén.