

EDITORIAL

In memory of Joseph Robert Rodarte, M.D.

R. Pellegrino*, V. Brusasco**

Dr. Joseph (Joe) Robert Rodarte died on September 13, 2000 in Houston after a long and devastating disease. Born in Temple, TX, USA, he received his education at Rice University in Houston and graduated in medicine from Harvard Medical School. After a short training period at Parkland Hospital, University of Texas, Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, Dr. Rodarte moved to the laboratory of Dr. Robert E. Hyatt at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, USA. He soon became Professor of Medicine and Physiology and Biophysics at the Mayo Medical School, then director of the Pulmonary Function Test Laboratory, and eventually Head of the Division of Thoracic Disease Research at the Mayo Clinic. In 1988 he moved to Houston, TX, USA, where he became Chief of the Pulmonary and Critical Care Section of the Department of Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and Chief of the Pulmonary and Critical Care Service at the Methodist Hospital. He was also appointed as Professor of Medicine and Molecular Physiology and Biophysics at Baylor and Adjunct Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Material Science at Rice University and Pulmonary Physiology at the University of Texas School of Public Health. In his extremely bright scientific career he published more than 100 papers in the most internationally recognized journals, such as the *Journal of Applied Physiology*, the *American Review of Respiratory Diseases*, the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*, *Anesthesiology*, *Respiration Physiology*, *Archives of Internal Medicine*, *Physiologist*, the *Journal of Biomechanics*, the *Mayo Clinical Proceedings*, *Chest*, the *European Respiratory Journal* and others. His main research interest was in the field of respiratory physiology where he covered an impressive number of hot topics that broadly stretch from chest wall and diaphragm mechanics to ventilation and lung and airway physiology. He received uninterrupted grant funding from the National Institute of Health for 30 years. He was a member of many scientific societies and also served on governing committees of the American

Thoracic Society (ATS), American Heart Association (AHA), American Physiological Society (APS), and federal agencies. His successful career was crowned with the Distinguished Achievement Award presented to him during the last ATS meeting in Toronto. He liked to travel to Europe and attend the European Respiratory Society meetings, where he gave lectures in the recent years.

We are amongst the many privileged persons who worked with him at the Mayo Clinic and at Baylor College of Medicine. In our stay we had the chance of personally appreciating the many faces of his outstanding personality. First of all, he was a chief loved by all members of his staff with no exceptions: colleagues, scientists, students and fellows, nurses, and administrative personnel. We never heard him give orders in the section, just advice and suggestions. All of us were fascinated by his ability to deal even with the toughest problems and to come out with the most elegant solutions. In the research field his brilliance was to set up experiments with the lightness of a masterpiece. His enthusiasm was contagious for all the staff, such that everybody profoundly believed in their own role. His devotion to scientific research never faded, even in the last tough year of his life; conscious of his destiny and with the disease already at an advanced stage, he wanted his friends and colleagues to join him in Houston last March for a scientific meeting. Even during his last few days he liked to be involved in the discussion of scientific data and in the preparation of manuscripts. Besides this, Joe Rodarte particularly excelled at human relationships. His house was open to everybody and he enjoyed parties and visiting friends. He always warmly extended his friendship to all the members of our families, especially the children with whom he used to play after dinner and capture their affection.

He is survived by his loving wife Doreen Sabalesky, M.D., his daughter Bettina, and all his friends. Our scientific community has lost one of the most outstanding members. We also lost a very good friend.