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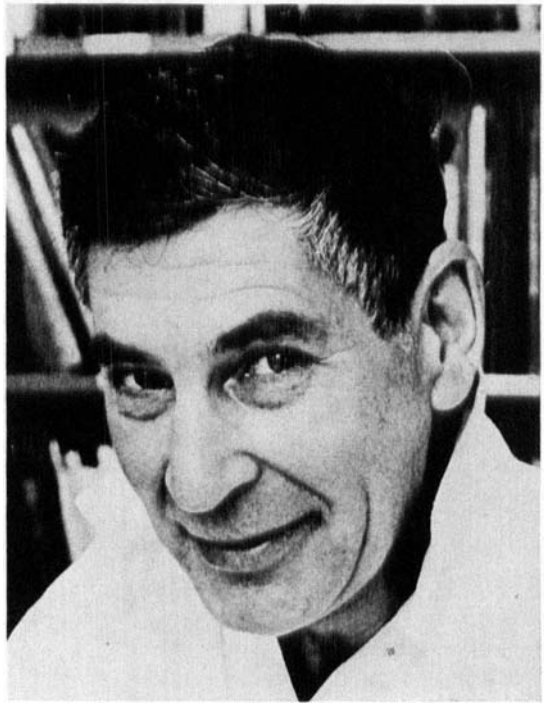

CARL HIRSCH
1913 – 1973

IN MEMORIAM

Carl Hirsch, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery and Chairman at the Department of Orthopaedics, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, died suddenly on June 21st, 1973. He was approaching his sixties, born in Stockholm on July 10th, 1913. It is with great sadness that all his Swedish and foreign colleagues have received the news of his tragic death.

He graduated from the Karolinska Institute in 1936 where he received his surgical and orthopaedic training. In 1944 he presented his Ph.D. thesis on chondromalacia of the patella. This was one of the first biomechanical studies incorporating the physical, histological and chemical properties of diseased cartilage.

After having worked in the Department of Orthopaedics at the Karolinska Hospital he became leader and professor of the same department

at Uppsala in 1957. In 1961 he moved as professor to Gothenburg where he stayed until 1969. Following this he returned to Stockholm as professor at the Karolinska Institute.

With the death of Carl Hirsch, international orthopaedic surgery as well as biomechanics has lost one of its best minds. His inspiring enthusiasm has guided and helped numerous research workers, not only in Sweden but around the world. He was granted honorary degrees in technology from London and Glasgow in 1968 and 1971, respectively. As an honorary member of several international research organizations and orthopaedic societies he made numerous trips to different countries where he was in constant demand as a speaker in biomechanics.

Carl Hirsch always had the ability to create a charming intellectual atmosphere both in a clinical and research environment. This unique quality stimulated his co-workers and inspired them.

His interest in biomechanical research started in the early forties at which time he was one of the very few in the world to foresee the impact that biomechanics would later have on orthopaedics - something that is so plainly obvious today. His first small biomechanical laboratory was housed in the Research Institute of King Gustaf V at Karolinska Institute and was later expanded both in Uppsala and in Gothenburg. During the years he supervised more than forty Ph.D. theses, and co-authored hundreds of articles in the field of biomechanics which were published from his department, many of these being written by foreign visitors. His work on the lumbar and cervical discs is particularly well-known, and while his investigations on the physical properties of bone and cartilage today, in the age of research into the mechanics of bone replacement arthroplasty and connective tissue, seem elementary, this was not so obvious thirty years ago when Carl Hirsch entered the field.

Thus in biomechanics Carl Hirsch was a pioneer and he became a world leader in a rapidly expanding field. In most university centres today engaged in orthopaedic research one can find a biomechanics laboratory, and many of them are headed by his former pupils. No less than ten of these have become professors and chairmen of various orthopaedic institutions in Scandinavia, in the United States, and other countries.

We who have been fortunate enough to collaborate with Carl Hirsch for some time always wondered where he found his sparkling energy. He was able not only to carry out pure original research but also to advance clinical orthopaedics. His scientific mind was always applied

to clinical problems where he was usually among the first to accept or reject new procedures based on his unbiased analytical approach.

Among Carl Hirsch's unusual qualities was that as a scientist he had not only energy and great joy in work but also a very strong interest in his fellow human beings and a sincere spontaneous kindness. These attributes inspired his colleagues to pursue both their clinical and research work with increased endeavour.

There are many around the world who mourn Carl Hirsch's death. The loss is great, first of all for his family, wife and children, but also for all of us who became a friend of a man who was so richly endowed with inner strength, warmth and intellectual energy. The memory of Carl Hirsch will always be honoured and his scientific glow kept alive.

Alf Nachemson