

DAVID GERAINT (GERRY) JAMES, MD, FRCP (1922-2010):
FOUNDER PRESIDENT OF WASOG AND FOUNDER CHIEF EDITOR OF
SARCOIDOSIS VASCULITIS AND DIFFUSE LUNG DISEASES



David Geraint James was born on January 2nd, 1922 in Treherbert, Rhondda Valley, Wales. His father was a teacher and wrote a regular Welsh column for the national daily, *The Western Mail*. From his father Gerry inherited his love for the Welsh lan-

guage and Welsh heritage. By the age of ten he became an active member of *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* (Welsh League of Youth) and had developed a command of both Welsh and English. He could give speeches in both languages, play the organ, and play rugby. His interest in science made him move to Pontypridd County School and throughout his life, Gerry remained proud of his Welsh roots. In 1939, Gerry joined Jesus College, a Welsh college at Cambridge. In June 1941 at the age of 19, he obtained a BA degree and honours in the National Science Tripos of anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry.

Gerry spent his final clinical year at the Middlesex Hospital sharing in the horrors of the London Blitz and taking care of the large number of casualties it produced. He and other students transported patients to safe havens each night when the bombing began and assisted with patients requiring treatment. When not transporting the wounded, Gerry volunteered to fire watch during the night. This entailed sitting on roof tops of the buildings and scanning the city for fires. These hard times developed in Gerry a positive and optimistic outlook that enabled him to make lasting friendships with war-bedraggled Londoners, nurses, patients, and above all, his colleagues. During those years he was touched by the aura of the great clinician Dr. George Beaumont, Senior Physician and author of a popular textbook of medicine. Gerry became Beaumont's house physician at both the Middlesex and Brompton Chest Hospital in the Fulham Road, both in London. In 1945, Gerry enlisted as a doctor for seven minesweepers and was stationed in the lead ship HMS

Halcyon whose assignment was to sweep the channel from Portsmouth to Calais so that boats could pass through. On demobilization from the Royal Navy, Gerry returned to London to work as a house physician to Professor John Guyet Scadding at the Brompton Hospital for Chest Diseases. Scadding, an erudite and knowledgeable clinician, who had amassed a large number of sarcoidosis patients at the Hammersmith and the Brompton Chest Hospital, instilled in Gerry the love and fascination for sarcoidosis. Gerry took up the challenge and started to study the disease. This was the beginning of Gerry's lifelong relationship with sarcoidosis.

At the Hammersmith, in 1949, Gerry met the young, brilliant Sheila Sherlock (later Dame Sheila), already a noted hepatologist. On December, 15th 1951, David Geraint James and Sheila Patricia Violet Sherlock were married. They had two daughters, Amanda and Auriole. Their marriage lasted for 50 years, and from the day they exchanged their vows they understood their roles in moving their marriage, family, and careers forward. Gerry was appointed Consultant Physician to the Royal Northern Hospital in Holloway, North London, on St. David's Day on March 1, 1959. Within months of his appointment to the Hospital, Gerry started his Sarcoidosis Clinic, devoted to studying all aspects of the disease. He enjoined and encouraged clinicians, epidemiologists, pathologists, epidemiologists and radiologists to work together to find the cause of sarcoidosis. These Monday afternoon sarcoidosis clinics attracted pulmonary specialists from all over the world and for more than three decades remained a Mecca for international sarcoidologists. They came to listen to Gerry and learn from his experience. He was simply a great teacher; his speech was mellifluous and authoritative, his pen was precise and authoritative. Audiences worldwide vouch for the former, and medical and lay readers are grateful for the latter. He wrote or edited six books and about 1,000 articles on

sarcoidosis, medical history, general medicine, lung diseases, and various Welsh matters.

In 1958, Gerry invited a group of national and international doctors to the Brompton Hospital for a meeting on sarcoidosis. The meeting lasted for three days. This was the First International Conference on Sarcoidosis; Gerry had sown the seeds of the movement that led to the formation of the World Association of Sarcoidosis and Other Granulomatous disorders (WASOG) in 1987, in Milan, Italy. Gerry was its Founder President. Soon after, with personal financial backing of Gianfranco Rizzato and with Gerry's persistence, the journal *Sarcoidosis*, became the official voice of WASOG. The sarcoidosis movement spread throughout the world and remains the glowing legacy of Gerry James' indomitable spirit.

Gerry James was a consummate historian; Jonathan Hutchinson, William Osler, and William Harvey were his medical heroes about whom he wrote and lectured throughout his life. After the death of his beloved Sheila in 2001, he wrote daily on the lives of great men and women in medicine. His last two articles came out this fall in *The History of Medical Biography*.

David Geraint James died peacefully on October 20, 2010 in London. His persona embodied the best qualities of a leader, a mentor, a loyal family man, and a dependable and generous friend. He will be sadly missed by those who knew him and those who wished to have known him. A long shadow falls on the sarcoidosis community – the shadow of the man who brilliantly pushed sarcoidosis out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge. His absence will be felt for decades to come.

Om P. Sharma, MD, FRCP
Past President, WASOG