



JUAN A. DEL REGATO, M.D.
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INTRODUCTION OF JANEWAY LECTURER 1973*

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Each year since 1933 this Society has sponsored a special Lecture, the purpose of which is dual. First, to recognize the contributions to our understanding of cancer made by an outstanding physician or scientist of the here and now, chosen by a special Committee of the Society. The second purpose of the Lectureship is to do honor to those scientists and physicians past upon whose shoulders we all stand. Although these Lectures have been known as the Janeway Lecture—after Dr. Henry Harrington Janeway, a New York physician and founder of this Society and an American pioneer in the use of Radium—the intent of this commemoration is truly more catholic than for just one man, and indeed, like the very name of this Society “The American Radium Society” is but a bit of verbal history—a shibboleth—indicative of true purpose.

So once again your Committee has carefully given ear to the advice of our emissaries, Hugin and Munin which appear in the heraldry of this Society, and have chosen as the one who will once again take us for a draught at the Well of Mimir—Juan del Regato, presently Director of the Penrose Cancer Hospital in this city. The Ravens may have been influenced in this recommendation by this name, for Mimir’s Well, being a well of knowledge, is by definition not a static but a flowing well and a flowing well is often the source of a brook or stream, and del Regato being translated means from or of the brook.

Our Lecturer of this year started his career in 1909 by being born in the provincial Cuban community of Camagüey into a humble family of Spanish and Mayan origins.

His early formal education started in the town of his birth and was continued under private tutelage in the port of Nuevitas to which his family had, because of greater opportunity, moved, and then for a while, because of political disturbances in Cuba, in his mother’s ancestral home of Mérida, Yucatán. When the political climate in Cuba improved, the Regato family returned to Cuba—to the larger community of Santa Clara—where young Juan completed his primary schooling.

During these early years, a number of circumstances occurred which I believe were formative of young Juan’s future. Señor Juan del Regato—the father—among other things ran the local photography shop and was the projectionist at a motion picture theater. This movie house

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was no great palace but a modest place of entertainment where 3-4-5 reels were shown from a single piece of projection equipment. This of course meant shutting down the show every time a reel had to be changed. To keep the audience occupied during these changes, it was young Juan's job to show lantern slides—and so started an occupation from which he has never recovered.

Another incident which helped mould the young Juan Angel was when at the age of 10 he was selected from his fellow students at the Santa Clara School to give a special speech on an occasion of considerable importance—the day celebrating Cuba's freedom from Spanish Rule. This was a portent for the future which has extended to today.

But perhaps the most indelible of all was the fact that the town of his birth was also the place of birth of an earlier great physician, Dr. Carlos J. Finlay, of worldwide reputation as one of the principals in the conquest of yellow fever. Juan never tired of hearing from the lips of his parents the story of this great man and early resolved to pattern his own life after his—to become a physician.

And so it transpired that in 1926 young Juan registered for the 7 year course in Medicine at the University of Havana. This meant much sacrifice for his family and hard work for the young man himself. His assiduous application to the work at hand and the fact that he had learned something about photography from his father attracted favorable attention from the Director of the Cancer Hospital attached to the University and he was offered and accepted a job in the X-ray Department, thus opening new doors to his growing experience. Political fate, however, struck again and before he could complete his medical training, the University was closed. The contacts he had made in the Cancer Hospital now stood him in good stead. The Cuban Cancer League saw promise in this young student and decided to sponsor his continued education abroad and so it was that young doctor-to-be del Regato went to France where he completed his medical training at the University of Paris in 1934 and consolidated his already determined resolve to pursue a career devoted to work in the field of Cancer.

Following graduation he was given a Fellowship at the Fondation Curie where he came under the influences of those whose names are legendary in Radiotherapy and Cancer Control—Regaud, Lacassagne, Coutard, whose assistant he became. He remained at the Fondation in this capacity till 1938, when Dr. Max Cutler prevailed upon Dr. Coutard to join him at the Chicago Tumor Institute. When Dr. Coutard went to Chicago, he took his promising young assistant with him and this is how Dr. Juan A. del Regato came to the USA where he became a naturalized citizen in 1941.

I didn't know it then and neither did Juan but in those days we worked within a short distance of each other—he at the Chicago Tumor Institute with Dr. Cutler, a Senior member of this Society, and Simeon Cantril and Franz Buschke, both past Janeway Lecturers, and I at Northwestern University with the late Dr. James Case, also a past Janeway Lecturer and past President of this Society.

Chicago was followed by 5 years of the practice of Radiotherapy and related research at the Garfield Hospital in Washington, D. C., and as a Research Fellow of the National Cancer Institute in Baltimore.

Now it happened that one day during this Washington phase of his life, there came out of Galva, Illinois, a young nurse named Inez to see the sights of the Nation's capital. Something must have already gone on between these two during Juan's Chicago days for he offered to show her the town. Never one to misuse an opportunity, Juan during the course of the day mentioned that he had in his pocket an interesting document and would the young lady like to see it? She would and this document just happened to be a marriage license—and so it came to pass that yet another milestone in Vita Regato was accomplished. To this union there came 3 children.

After Washington there came 6 years as Chief of Radiotherapy at the Ellis Fishel Cancer

Hospital in Columbia, Missouri. It was at the Ellis Fishel that he developed a lasting association with Dr. Lauren Ackerman, your Janeway Lecturer of 2 years ago, and with whom he wrote what has come to be a standard reference and classic in the American Cancer Literature. It was here, too, that he started his still larger family—a family that still today he fathers in ever increasing numbers—the children of his mind and soul, his trainees—who now number in the dozens and for whom, even if all else is forgotten, he will always be honored and remembered.

Since 1949, del Regato has been Medical Director of the Penrose Cancer Hospital of this city—the story of how this all came about is a tale of its own. It is here that he has come into full flower. Emerson wrote that if a man write a better book—preach a better sermon—build a better church organ or make a better mouse trap—though he build his house in the wilderness, the world will beat a path to his door.

Colorado Springs is not quite a wilderness, but certainly the path to Dr. del Regato's door is widely known and well worn.

The many accomplishments of our Lecturer are too well known and the honors accorded him too many and too much a matter of record to recount here. Sufficient to say, that it gives me the greatest personal pleasure to, on behalf of the Janeway Lecture Committee, introduce as the 38th Lecturer Juan Angel del Regato, M. D., Sc. D., respected physician, widely read and known author and authority on clinical cancer management, beloved teacher, historian, political-social and moral philosopher, who will speak to us on "Total Body Irradiation in the Treatment of Chronic Lymphogenous Leukemia."

