

***IN MEMORY: HERBERT N. HULTGREN, M.D.***

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**O**n October 18, 1997, Herbert N. Hultgren, MD, a famed cardiologist and pioneering researcher in the field of high altitude medicine, died at his home in Stanford, California. He was 80 years old.

I first met Herb during my internship at Stanford University Medical Center in 1982, where he was Chief of Cardiology at the Palo Alto Veterans Hospital, and he became a close friend and mentor. Most of the members of the mountain medicine community are well aware of Herb's contribution to high altitude physiology. He was an avid climber and medical advisor for the American Alpine Club. His hemodynamic studies of patients with high altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE) in the Peruvian Andes and in Colorado, were the defining studies in the field demonstrating that HAPE was virtually always associated with pulmonary hypertension due to a prominent hypoxic pulmonary vasoconstriction, without elevation of pulmonary capillary wedge pressure. In a series of ingenious studies in dogs, he gradually reduced the volume of the pulmonary circulation demonstrating that high pressure and flow through a constricted vascular bed could result in alveolar edema. His resultant elaboration of the "overperfusion" theory of HAPE remains to this day, the most widely accepted hypothesis of this elusive condition. Herb's fund of knowledge regarding high altitude medicine was legion -- most remarkable to me was his extraordinary ability to integrate older descriptive studies with more modern basic science resulting in a perspective that always caused me to seek him out for advice on data analysis or interpretation. We are all extremely fortunate that Herb recently published his own book entitled High Altitude Medicine under his own label. I encourage all to read it and refer to it in your work -- I know that I shall.

What many in this community are not aware of however, was Herb's contribution to cardiovascular disease.

Born in Santa Rosa, California, Herb graduated from Stanford University in 1939 and from the Stanford School of Medicine in 1943. He also completed residencies in medicine and pathology at Stanford. Between the residencies, he served in Europe with the U.S. Army Medical Corps. After a research fellowship in cardiology at Thorndike Memorial Laboratory in Boston, he joined the Stanford faculty in 1948 and was chief of the Stanford cardiology division for 12 years. During that time he designed and established the first cardiac catheterization laboratory in Northern California. In 1967, he moved to the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, where he served as chief of cardiology services for 16 years. He was the Principal Investigator for the Veterans Administration Cooperative Study comparing the medical vs surgical management of patients with coronary heart disease. This pioneering study serves as one of the three most important randomized clinical trials of coronary disease that have guided the management of such patients throughout the world. In 1990, Hultgren won the prestigious Albion W. Hewlett Award, which honors the "physician of care and skill who is committed to discovering and using biologic

knowledge, wisdom and compassion to return patients to productive lives.” He authored more than 300 scientific articles and abstracts, 30 book chapters, and the above mentioned High-Altitude Medicine, which was published in June 1997.

Herb was a remarkable clinician. A compassionate man, he brought the same enthusiasm and intensity that you are all familiar with in mountain medicine to the management of patients with heart disease and I have never met anyone with a better bedside manner or diagnostic acumen in my 15 years in clinical medicine. It is from Herb that I first learned that one could merge a vocation and an avocation into a medical career that could be rewarding and fun. Finally, I must add that Herb was a wonderful person. He never felt the need to trumpet his accomplishments and he was remarkably self-effacing. A gruff exterior reflected a no-nonsense approach to life that made him absolutely honest and dependable -- no ulterior motives or “back-door” politics for Herb! He was a terrific teacher, a devoted physician, and a good friend. I and many others will miss him.

Herb is survived by his wife, Barbara, three sons, Peter of Phoenix, Bruce of Montara and John of Los Gatos; and one grandson.

*Benjamin Levine*