

Obituary

Alain Rossier (1930–2006)

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It was with great sadness that I was informed about Alain's demise on the 12th of May at the age of 76 years.

In 1956, having ended his medical studies in Geneva, and wanting to become a surgeon, he sustained, during that summer, a swimming pool accident and became a mid-thoracic complete paraplegic.

He was treated at the Rehabilitation Centre of Fontainebleau in the South of Paris and, after, in Garches at the time directed by Professor Grossiord.

He went to the US, and was mainly at the VA Centre of Long Beach, CA, USA, where he trained under the direction of Ernest Bors and Estin Commar. He started to publish many articles, mainly in the domain of neuro-urology, which was one of his many research interests. He also went to Stoke Mandeville in Great Britain where he met Sir Ludwig Guttman in 1962, and where we met.

He created the model SCI Centre in Geneva at the Beausejour Hospital (1964–1973). He then became a University Docent after a brilliant presentation which I attended. Before that I had read, with the greatest and constant interest, one of his first publications: a monograph on the rehabilitation of the spinal cord injured, published in *Acta Medica* by Documenta Geigy. This publication had been encouraged by Professor Francillon, then Director of the Balgrist Orthopaedic Clinic in Zurich. He had also been working there for some time. After Geneva he moved to Boston and created there the specialized model VA Center

(1973–1984). He was made Professor at Harvard University where he had the Chair on Paraplegia. He later directed the Centre of Zurich (1985–1992) and then created the International Research Association (IRP) in the French speaking part of Switzerland.

He married a charming Danish physiotherapist, Birthe, who helped him considerably in all his endeavors besides his unfortunate and numerous health problems, mainly terrible complications due to his paraplegia. She was a great person and a great friend of ours. Unfortunately, she died some years ago from cancer, which was a terrible loss for Alain, in all respects.

His leading publications are numerous, especially in the field of neuro-urology and the treatment and rehabilitation of the spinal cord traumatic and nontraumatic victims. He gathered a considerable number of medical references and publications. The book published with Alan Hardy remains a reference tool for many of us. He transferred, following my advice, all his references (30 000...) to the PARADOC data basis, at the Swiss Paraplegic Centre, in Nottwil, Switzerland, where they are kept at the disposal of all interested. He was honoured by many different Medical and Humanitarian societies. He was made a member of the International Red Cross Committee. Before that he led the Committee on Handicap Architecture and City planning for Geneva.

He joined the International Medical Society of Paraplegia (IMSoP) in 1962, and was awarded the Society Medal in 1987. He became the Society's President from 1984 to 1988. He was made an Emeritus Member in 1993, and Chairperson of the Prevention Committee from 1992 to 2000. He was also on the Editorial Board of *Paraplegia*, subsequently *Spinal Cord*, and was Assistant Editor of this journal until his demise.

It is difficult for me as a great professional friend and admirer to recall all of his achievements in our common fields of interest. He was also a very good personal friend of mine. Our best way of communication was the telephone, sometimes the fax.... These contacts were very frequent indeed. Not having news for a fortnight started to get me worried... until Professor Brigitte Schurch of Zurich, a friend of ours, called to give us the sad news.

For those interested, Professor Albert Tricot wrote an article on him in *Paraplegia* in 1989 (volume 27: 81–84).

P Dollfus