

**Ryszard and me**

**I**t is a great pleasure for me to record my memories of Professor Ryszard Gryglewski for those who knew him and to those who did not have the chance to know one of the greatest scientists and human beings I have ever encountered.

My knowledge of Ryszard as a scientist began when I was a student in the laboratory of Professor Andrew J. Lonigro at Saint Louis University in St. Louis Missouri, far from Krakow. My mentor studied the role of prostaglandins in the renal circulation. I was very young and very new to science having just completed training in pulmonology. Dr. Lonigro suggested I read some review papers addressing the role of prostaglandins in the control of blood flow. He gave me a wonderful paper by someone named Ryszard Gryglewski. This was my introduction to what would become my life-long quest to understand the role of arachidonic acid metabolites, nitric oxide and red blood cells in the control of blood flow. I have never forgotten that paper.

In 1983 My mentor and I were invited to a scientific symposium in Poland. It was a true shock for a young man from the Midwest of the United States to visit a communist country, one that had just emerged from marshal law. I remember that the streets of Krakow seemed colorless and without life. I also remember that we were given a tour by a very kind and gentle man who was clearly proud of his Polish heritage and history. I was excited to learn that it was Professor Ryszard Gryglewski. I introduced myself and he was very kind to me and the other scientists in our group.

After I had gained experience in the laboratory, I was given the opportunity to work with Professor Sir John Vane at the William Harvey Institute in London, England as a visiting scientist. My family and I moved to London for a year. The first day that I was in Sir John's laboratory I was assigned an office. In the office was a large and very nice desk that was next to a window that overlooked a beautiful courtyard. There was also a small desk that was in the opposite dark corner. Neither desk was occupied so I took the big one with the view. Two days later, when I returned from the laboratory one afternoon, I found that someone else was using the office and had taken the other small and dark desk. The other person was not there, but I saw a letter on the little desk and I decided to see who this person was. The letter

was addressed to Professor Ryszard Gryglewski. I was amazed by the thought that I would be in the office with the man who helped introduce me to science. I looked at his desk and mine and I decided that things had to change. I moved all my things to the little corner desk and moved Ryszard's things to the big desk by the window. I then waited until he came in and introduced myself again. To my great delight, Professor Ryszard Gryglewski remembered me and was interested in my project. He was a very intuitive man and immediately made several wonderful suggestions that made my project much more focused and exciting. I loved him immediately. We often had lunch together and talked about science as well as life. Over the course of my time in London, Ryszard made several trips to the William Harvey to do research. We always had a wonderful time together and he met my wife and children.

Over the next three decades I was invited many times by Ryszard to present my work at symposia in Krakow and other beautiful places in Poland. On one occasion I spoke before a gathering of members of the Polish Academy of Science, something I will never forget. Speakers in these symposia were often asked to contribute a paper as well, and I always did so. Some of our best work is published in Polish scientific journals. I always wanted to do that to thank Professor Gryglewski but also because of the respect for Polish science that he had instilled in me.

We always had a magnificent dinner at the end of the symposia, often in a castle or a building of great historical importance. Ryszard always added a wonderful historical perspective. As I said before, he loved and was very proud of his country and it was obvious. On one occasion, I was at one of the formal dinners with my wife, Susie. We were seated with the Ryszard and his wife, Theresa. After dinner, there was dancing. I am not a good dancer and Theresa had injured her foot so we stayed at the table but Ryszard rose, bowed to my wife and invited her to the dance floor. It may be a little-known fact, but Professor Ryszard Gryglewski was a marvelous dancer. My wife was swept away. Theresa and I drank vodka together.

On another occasion, I spoke in Bydgoszcz. I was with my wife and we decided to take the train back to Warsaw although we had no real understanding of the Polish language.

We were very proud of ourselves and we showed Ryszard and Theresa what we had done. They laughed and told us we had actually purchased bus tickets to Krakow. They offered to drive us to Warsaw and we accepted. On the way, after several hours of driving, Ryszard was stopped for speeding. He was very upset but it got worse. I automatically reached for my passport when the officer approached the car. Unfortunately, my wife and I had both left our passports at the hotel desk in Bydgoszcz. Now Ryszard was really unhappy, but he smiled (I think it was a smile) and we went back for the passports. He was a good sport.

Ryszard was a great help to me in my scientific career. The symposia that he organized at the Jagiellonian University always included famous scientists from all over Europe and the United States. Almost always a Nobel laureate or two were present. The great beauty of these gatherings was not only to hear great science presented, but it was also to have the opportunity of young scientists to interact with great established scientists in a friendly and intellectually stimulating manner. That is the way Ryszard organized things. If it were not for these meetings, I would never have met great men like Professor Andrzej Szczeklik. Andrzej was one of the kindest and most humble men I have ever known. I still read passages from his book, "Catharsis" on occasion. It is a wonderful view of the art of medicine. These are the kinds of gifts and opportunities that the symposia that Ryszard organized provided for a younger scientist like me.

When I was at the William Harvey Institute on one occasion when Ryszard visited, I presented some new finding I had in the laboratory. I could not explain the mechanism responsible, but the findings were real and were potentially important. I was struggling to figure out the problem. Ryszard liked the results and made a wonderful suggestion. He said to me "Pin a summary of the data on the wall above your desk. One day it will come to you". He was right, several weeks later I saw the answer. It started me on a path that consumed the last 25 years of my career. We finally got the answer. I always felt that Ryszard had started me down the right path.

I often told Ryszard that every time I came to Krakow it was more beautiful. It is true. I still remember 1983. The city today is vibrant and full of color, wonderful food, laughing

people, beautiful churches and synagogues and a great University. Every time I returned to my favorite city in Europe, Krakow, it was more beautiful. I liked to say that to Ryszard, it always made him smile. I have now been to Krakow once since Ryszard's passing. It is still beautiful, but somehow it is not quite so bright and cheerful. It is missing a bright light and a great soul. Krakow and the Jagiellonian University and Poland as well as science are all diminished by the passing of Professor Ryszard Gryglewski.

I have always believed that in life we select our heroes. People we respect. People we aspire to be like. People we want to be around. People we admire. Ryszard was one of my heroes. I miss him very much.

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