

## REMINISCENCES OF A FRIEND AND MENTOR: JURO “JERRY” WADA 1922–2011

Wolfgang R. Ade, M.D.

*Dokkyo Medical University, Institute of International Education and Research, Shimotsuga-gun, Tochigi-Ken, Japan*

I first met Dr. Juro Wada in the spring of 1982. He had moved from Sapporo 5 years earlier to head the Department of Thoracic Surgery at what was then called the Tokyo Women’s Medical College. I was impressed by his generous attention to me despite the fact that I was a young man at the beginning of my career. From that point on, I continued to be amazed by his sharp wit. He grasped situations rapidly and made courageous decisions that often challenged the perceptions and assumptions of those around him. He did not want to waste time with trivia, and he made his preferences known.

Dr. Wada’s brain seemed to be continuously designing new surgical procedures and devices. For example, we have him to thank for the tilting disc valve, the sternal turnover procedure for funnel chest patients, and the Wada thermo-disc oxygenator, which was sent to the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston at the request of cardiac surgeon Dwight Harken.

Dr. Wada was ahead of his time, particularly with regard to his development of the heart valve. Had pyrolytic carbon been available at that time, I dare to guess that his valve could still be in use today.

In 1988, with strong international support from the likes of Christian Cabrol, Denton Cooley, Charles Hahn, Norman Shumway, and Nobuyuki Tanaka,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Wada founded a new society called the International Society of Cardio-Thoracic Surgeons that included both cardiovascular and thoracic surgeons. This reflected his often-expressed conviction that any surgeon who opens the chest must be able to handle all situations. In 1991, to my profound surprise, Dr. Wada asked me to serve as secretary general of the present World Society of Cardio-Thoracic Surgeons together with Hiroshi Akiyama, the congenital surgeon who developed a technique for transoral esophagectomy.<sup>2</sup> Jerry Wada was gratified to see his society grow. At the Eighth World Congress in 1998, Dr. Michael E. DeBakey served as Honorary Chairman. In 2005, Dr. Wada wrote in the introduction to the 15th World Congress of the WSCTS, “Your interest in the WSCTS and especially in this 15th World Congress assures me that the vision of a truly globally minded Society, which I had developed in the late ‘80s of the last century, has been realized.”<sup>3</sup> In October of 2010, Ludwig von Segesser delivered the first Wada Oration<sup>4</sup> with the title, “From the Magic Mountain to Rocket Science in Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery.” It was a story that spanned over a century between climate therapy for pulmonary tuberculosis and rotary pump technology that derived from rocket development.

As demanding as Dr. Wada could be with his staff surgeons, he was always kind, caring, and devoted to helping all patients. We who have outlived him are now called to live up to his example.



Dr. Juro Wada (center) and Dr. Michael E. DeBakey (second from right) pictured at the Eighth World Congress of the World Society of Cardio-Thoracic Surgeons on November 2, 1998. Also pictured are (from left) Drs. Kozo Suma, Shiaki Kawada, Esteban Fernández Noda, and Reiner Körfer (far right), who was the president of the society at the time.

### References

1. CTSNet [Internet]. Baltimore: CTSNet; c1998-2011. Ade W. In memoriam: Dr. Nobuyuki Tanaka; 2006 Jun 28 [cited 2011 Dec 20]. Available from: <http://www.ctsnet.org/announcements/announcement343.html>.
2. Akiyama H, Tsurumaru M, Ono Y, Udagawa H, Matsuda M, Kajiyama Y. Transoral esophagectomy. *Surg Gynecol Obstet*. 1991 Nov;173(5):399-400.
3. Wada J. Chancellor’s Greetings. 15th World Congress, World Society of Cardio-Thoracic Surgeons; Vilnius, Lithuania. June 19-23, 2005. *J Cardiovasc Surg*. 2005;46(3 Suppl 1).
4. von Segesser LK. From the Magic Mountain to Rocket Science in thoracic and cardiovascular surgery. *Interact Cardiovasc Thorac Surg*. 2003;2:217-8.