

Albert C. Sherwin

March 23, 1922 — July 14, 1969

The medical staff of the New York Hospital, the Department of Psychiatry of Cornell Medical College, and the personnel of the Westchester Division, were shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Dr. Albert C. Sherwin on July 14, 1969, at forty-seven years of age. At the time of his death he was associate professor of psychiatry at Cornell Medical College and associate attending psychiatrist in New York Hospital, serving as chief of the in-patient services at the Westchester Division of the New York Hospital.

Dr. Sherwin was a native of New York City, born on March 23, 1922, one of two children. His father was an attorney and his brother, who survives him, is also a member of the legal profession. He attended secondary schools in New York City and then entered Columbia College, graduating in 1942. He had, besides an outstanding scholastic record at this institution, distinguished accomplishments in extra-curricular activities, especially in music. In this field, his work as a pianist, arranger, and conductor was outstanding. This talent produced conflicts regarding his life's goal and his indecision between a law career and medicine. It was society's good fortune that he decided upon a medical career.

He was graduated from the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1947 and served an internship at the Hospital for Joint Diseases in New York City. He selected the field of psychiatry as a specialty and received his graduate training at the Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic from 1949 to 1952. Following his residency he served as a captain in the United States Air Corps, functioning as a psychiatric medical officer from 1952 to 1954 in the European theater of operations. After his discharge he returned to the full-time staff of the Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic and continued to serve there until he joined the staff of the Westchester Division in September 1968 where he continued until his untimely death.

At the New York Hospital he attained the ranks of assistant attending and associate attending psychiatrist. Following his return to the Payne Whitney Clinic he joined the out-patient department as assistant chief of the entire psychiatric out-patient department until 1956, when he assumed the directorship of child psychiatry and chief of the children's out-patient department. He continued in this capacity until 1966, when he transferred to the Westchester Division, at first as a part-time supervising consultant and then assuming the position of chief of in-patient services in September 1968. Throughout this period of service he held the ranks of instructor, assistant professor, clinical associate professor, and associate professor of psychiatry at Cornell University Medical College.

In his professional career he attained distinction as a physician and psychiatrist. He was recognized as an excellent clinical psychiatrist based on a firm foundation of structured principles of psychopathology. He was a skilled therapist with a dynamic orientation, aware of all therapeutic tools and techniques. As a teacher, he was held in the highest esteem by all who had any contact with him. The basic course on psychopathology for second-year medical students was revitalized and reorganized by him. This course is held in high regard in the school's curriculum. Residents and fellows were stimulated by his grasp of clinical and therapeutic concepts and the ability to impart his gifts to them. He was always available as a teacher to all professional personnel, including pediatricians, social service workers, and psychologists, giving freely of his wisdom with consultation and advice. He assumed the directorship of the children's service with a reluctance to commit himself completely. Nevertheless, his contribution to this field regarding autistic children, diagnostic criteria for schizophrenia, and the interaction of families with sick children to their social, cultural environment, were outstanding.

In September 1966, at the Westchester Division, he returned to his favorite area of psychiatry as director in charge of the treatment of patients and supervisor of residents and was in the process of formulating research plans of a wide variety. He contributed many other articles to the literature in the field of psychiatry, involving application of creativity, arts, and music in the field of psychopathology. He held memberships in various professional societies: the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology Inc., the New York County Medical Society, the American Psychiatric Association, the New York District branch of the APA, the New York Council for Child Psychiatry, and others.

Despite his active psychiatric career, he had a reputation among the entire personnel of the New York Hospital for his musical talents. At most social functions he would end up "on the piano," playing to the delight of all the guests present. He organized and conducted choir groups for the resident staff as well as the nurses and other interested persons. He was short in stature, somewhat obese, with pyknic features. All who knew him will remember him as an intelligent, warm, friendly human being with a kind, sensitive, and humorous charm. He was conscientious and devoted to his patients almost to a fault. He was a dedicated family man and is survived by his wife, Dr. Marie Louise Schoelly, also a psychiatrist, who shared not only his personal life but collaborated with him in many of his professional accomplishments. In his passing, the New York Hospital, Cornell Medical College, and society have lost a physician, clinician and teacher and we will miss a distinguished colleague and a devoted friend.

Francis J. Hamilton, M.D.