On August 11, 2006, in the Rakowicki Cemetery in Cracow, we paid a last tribute to Professor Marian Barczyński, MD, Ph.D., a wonderful man, an eminent physician – surgeon, and Professor Emeritus of the Faculty of Medicine, Collegium Medicum, Jagiellonian University. He was 75 years old.

Marian Barczyński was born in Strzemieszyce near Będzin on August 13, 1930. It was there that he attended a primary school and a junior high school. Under the Nazi occupation, he worked for the railway company as an under-age youth, while at the same time continuing education in an underground school. After World War II, he was a student of the B. Prus High School for Boys in Sosnowiec, where he passed his high school finals following the Program of Natural Sciences on June 10, 1950. At that time, he was strongly involved in the activities of the Polish Scout Association.

He graduated the Faculty of Medicine, Nicolaus Copernicus Medical Academy, in Cracow, on October 3, 1955. During his studies, he had already formed close ties with the First Department of Surgery headed by Professor Józef Bogusz, and upon graduation, he found employment there as a junior assistant. It was there that Marian Barczyński climbed the steps of his academic career, from a junior assistant to full professor and department head.

He passed his first degree board examination in surgery on March 4, 1959, and – having completed his two-year military service in the Mili-
tary Hospital in Olsztyn between 1961 and 1963 - he sat for his second degree board examination in surgery on March 15, 1965. Upon presentation of a doctoral dissertation entitled “The effect of nitrogranulogen perfusion on morphotic blood elements and bone marrow,” he was granted the title of Doctor of Medical Sciences on June 3, 1966. He was conferred the title of Assistant Professor on February 23, 1973 based on the habilitation dissertation entitled “Experimental studies on options of supporting liver function in the course of liver insufficiency.” During this period, the dissertation was of pioneering character and became the experimental basis for further development of the surgery of the liver, including liver transplantation. When Professor Józef Bogusz retired on September 30, 1974, Marian Barczyński was nominated as acting head of the First Chair and Department of Surgery and held the position until September 30, 1975. He was appointed Assistant Professor of the Krakow Medical Academy on May 28, 1976 and was granted the title of Associate Professor on July 12, 1982.

After the death of Professor Mieczysław Politowski, on May 17, 1984, the Rector of the Medical Academy of Cracow granted the request of the Faculty of the Third Chair and Department of General Surgery and entrusted Professor Barczyński with the function of acting Chair, and, subsequently, Chair. Between September 1, 1984 and August 31, 1987, he was also Vice-Rector for Clinical Affairs of the Cracow Medical Academy. On May 1, 1997, he was appointed Full Professor of the Jagiellonian University. Marian Barczyński retired on October 1, 2000, but he unceasingly continued working as a surgeon and a teacher to his last days, offering help to his patients and sharing his knowledge and experience with his younger colleagues.

For many years, he held the function of Chairman of the Cracow Branch of the Society of Polish Surgeons; he was also on General Board of the Society. Marian Barczyński was an Honorary Member and a member of board of the Krakow Branch of the Polish Medical Society. He was the founder of the Cracow School of Endocrinological Surgery, a founding member of the Polish Club of Endocrinological Surgery, and a co-founder of the Professor Józef Bogusz Association for Development of Endocrinological Surgery. In the years 1984-1988, he was a councilman on the Council of the City of Cracow.

As head of the Department, he formed an eminent, highly-specialized team of physicians, who gave their best to the patients and continuously pursued the highest levels of professional knowledge. At its peak during 80’s and 90’s, and at the turn of the of the 20th century, the Third Chair and Department of General Surgery had as many as 135 beds, first operating in the Province Specialist Hospital, and then in the Gabriel Narutowicz Municipal Specialist Hospital. At that time, this was the largest surgical ward in Poland. Its organizational structure accommodated a general surgery ward with traumatology, reconstructive and plastic surgery units, a postoperative ward, an intensive care unit and a pediatric surgical ward; the annual number of operations exceeded 2500 procedures. Under the supervision and guidance of Professor Barczyński, the Faculty of the Third Chair and Department of General Surgery implemented valuable research projects in surgery of the gastrointestinal tract, plastic surgery, and traumatology and orthopedic surgery. However, the most important achievement of Professor Barczyński was his creative efforts imparted towards the development of a modern center of endocrinological surgery that would mostly specialize in thyroid surgery, including hypertrophic goiter, recurrent goiter and thyroid carcinoma. At that time, the annual number of surgical procedures approximated 1000 and patients were recruited from the entire region of southeast Poland. He also developed diagnostic services for the Department, establishing a laboratory of ultrasonography and biopsy diagnostics, which contributed much to improving therapeutic results of thyroid disease management in our region of Poland. In the field of thyroid surgery, he was a facilitator of the Cracow School of Surgery. Professor Barczyński introduced numerous modifications of techniques employed in thyroid surgery, such as dissection of the isthmus of the thyroid as one of the first stages of procedures performed in patients with giant goiter - this maneuver markedly facilitates bringing the goiter forward from behind the sternum and its further resection - and the technique of “paracapsular” ligation of branches of the inferior thyroid artery rather than ligating the artery trunk, which decreased the number of complications consisting in recurrent laryn-
geal nerve damage and significantly lowered the percentage of postoperative hypoparathyroidism.

In addition to his clinical activities, Professor Barczyński was a highly valued forensic medicine expert and a long-term collaborator with the Chair and Department of Forensic Medicine, Collegium Medicum, Jagiellonian University. He was well-known for his vast knowledge of medicine, wide experience, as well as thoroughness, diligence, objectivity, uncompromising nature and prudence in formulating opinions. For two terms, he was a judge of the District Medical Court in Cracow.

In recognition of his merits, he received numerous awards and orders, such as the Order for Meritorious Work in Health Care Sector, the Gold Award for Services to the Cracow Region, the Gold Merit Cross, as well as the Knight’s Cross and the Officer’s Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. He was a reserve major of the Polish army.

During his more than 50-year career as a physician, Professor Barczyński was actively involved in research, education, organizational and community-directed activities. He was an eminent surgeon, a brilliant operator, an inquisitive scientist and a highly valued teacher of many generations of physicians and nurses. For many years, he was a passionate lecturer in surgery for students of all faculties of the Medical Academy. It should be emphasized that for a long period, he lectured on surgery in the Nursing School, well aware of the importance of the role played by a nurse in the team management of a surgical patient, and organized and carried out examinations for postgraduate students. Professor Barczyński’s scientific works include more than 200 papers published in peer-reviewed Polish and international medical periodicals and almost 20 chapters written for textbooks of surgery. He was a member of numerous Polish and international scientific societies. Professor Barczyński educated a vast number of physicians, numerous generations of pupils – highly valued surgeons, many of whom hold independent positions of physicians-in-chief or department heads. He supervised the writing of 27 doctoral dissertations and two post-doctoral habilitation theses. Under his guidance, several scores of physicians prepared for board examinations in general surgery.

In his professional career, he was guided by the words of his mentor and master, Professor Józef Bogusz, who used to tell his pupils that “A physician must represent more than a high level of professional skills, solid knowledge and experience. This is not enough. A prerequisite for success of each and every physician is also his kind, friendly, humane attitude to every sick human being.” And such was the attitude of Professor Barczyński to his patients, to whom he devoted his entire life. Surgery was not his only life-long passion, but also his vocation. He was a generous-hearted man, well-known for his selflessness and altruism, high ethical and moral values, exceptional integrity and diligence. Always helpful, obliging and friendly, willingly offering his entire medical knowledge and vast experience to his suffering patients, Marian Barczyński, an unassuming and modest man, was kind towards everyone, especially towards each individual in need. Through his conduct, exceedingly good manners and deeply-rooted respect for another human being, he was able to solve many a difficult – even the most difficult – problem.

His sensitivity and humanism were evident in his interest in poetry, painting and music (he played the violin very well, and while still a student, was even a member of a Student Musical Ensemble).

To the very last days of his life, Professor Barczyński enjoyed the trust of his patients, friendship and gratitude of his younger colleagues for the knowledge and experience he imparted.

With his wife Halina, Professor Barczyński brought up his only son, Marcin, also a physician-surgeon. Professor Barczyński departed from this world prematurely, after a severe illness, on August 5, 2006.

We bid farewell to Professor Barczyński in deep grief, silently and pensively. It is hard to believe that his cheerful face and kindness towards others will not be a fixture of our daily life any longer. Yet, this is how we will keep him in our hearts and our memory forever.

Prof. dr hab. Stanisław Cichoń
Dr med. Marcin Barczyński