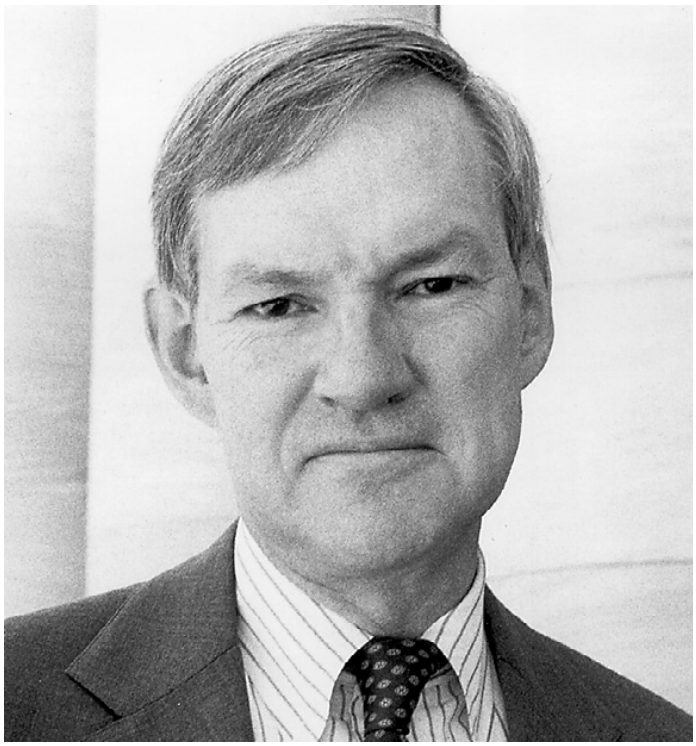
THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE
Harvard University

Thomas Woodward Smith



Thomas Woodward Smith, a longtime leader of cardiology at Harvard Medical School, succumbed after a long battle with cancer, in March of 1997. Dr. Smith emerged from the strong clinical tradition in Cardiology established at the Massachusetts General Hospital (M.G.H.), under the leaderships of Drs. Paul Dudley White and Edward Bland. Steeped during his training in both this strong clinical discipline and the scientific leadership of Dr. Edgar Haber, Thomas Smith fused these two traditions as he would then fashion the Cardiovascular Division at the Brigham and Women's Hospital (B.W.H.), shaping it into a world leader in contemporary cardiology. Thomas Smith's success and legacy derived from his many facets of personal excellence.

As an administrator, Thomas Smith had the vision to create a model of a cardiovascular division that balanced scientific and clinical pursuits, much as his own accomplishments reflected this equilibrium. He had the prescience to cultivate areas of investigation before they blossomed into general understanding. This enabled him to recruit or "home grow" a cadre of investigators who made seminal contributions to world cardiology. Thomas Smith was able to combine autonomy and guidance in his staff members in a way that maximized their independence and productivity.

As a scientist, Thomas Smith made a succession of major contributions to our understanding of the role of the digitalis glycosides in cardiovascular therapeutics. As a young faculty member at the M.G.H., he developed the radioimmunoassay for digitalis. This advance led to scientific dosing of digitalis, a widely acclaimed boon to the practice of medicine. Not satisfied with this application of antibody technology for diagnostic use, Smith developed antibody therapy for digitalis toxicity, an illustration of the application of an advance in basic science to the service of clinical medicine. This work represented the first application of antibody therapy in cardiovascular disease, a herald of the current burgeoning of this approach. Thomas

Smith's portfolio of scientific accomplishments included fundamental work in understanding the role of the central nervous system in mediating some of the effects of digitalis. These are but a few examples of his contributions to cardiovascular pharmacology, both basic and clinical.

During the 1990's, the Smith laboratory deepened its approach to the regulation of myocardial contractility. The Smith group led the charge of unraveling the roles of the endogenous mediator nitric oxide in cardiovascular control A series of pioneering papers, pinpointing the role of nitric oxide derived from cardiac myocytes in cardiovascular function and in intracellular signaling, represented the pinnacle of Thomas Smith's scientific career. His latest work was among his most fundamental and innovative.

Perhaps the most enduring achievement of Thomas Smith was his success as a mentor. During his tenure as Chief of Cardiology at the B.W.H., hundreds of clinical and research fellows participated in the training programs that he led. The list of his graduates and trainees, their current positions, and their scientific and clinical accomplishments constitutes a veritable Who's Who of contemporary cardiology. Numerous section heads and division chiefs trained at the Brigham during his tenure. He was uniformly successful in recruiting the brightest young minds, cultivating their strong points, and pointing them in the direction that would maximize their achievements and satisfaction. His imprint as a mentor is indelible.

Such a portfolio of professional accomplishments would be satisfaction enough for many. However, Thomas Smith was not easily satisfied. He had a lifelong passion for learning that stretched far beyond medicine and professional pursuits. He possessed a broad culture that included a large lexicon of literary knowledge. He was as conversant with classical music and 19th century British literature as he was with the intricacies of digitalis action. He was a connoisseur of the arts and architecture. He was seldom stumped by a question, be it literary or medical. In addition to his active life of the mind, Thomas Smith was an accomplished all-around athlete. He played basketball aggressively, golf with sagacity, and tennis with both qualities. Many an over-confident fellow, when challenged to an athletic contest by Thomas Smith, learned to respect his prowess in no uncertain terms. An additional, and essential aspect of this complex and complete individual was his devotion to his wonderful family. His wife Sherley, and his three children, formed a closely knit and accomplished group. Thomas Smith derived enormous satisfaction from the accomplishments of his children. His wife, Sherley, in addition to shaping many young lives as a school teacher, also provided a radiant example to all of Tom Smith's trainees and colleagues.

Thomas W. Smith faced his final illness with uncommon courage and grace. He continued his intense involvement with the affairs of the Division and the scientific work in his laboratory until the very end. He never uttered a complaint and dealt with death as he had with everything else in his life, as a gentleman. Thomas Woodward Smith shall be long remembered and much missed by his many friends, colleagues, students, and co-workers. Harvard has lost a rare individual, a creative scientist, a wonderful clinician, a devoted teacher, and a superior human being.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Libby, *Chairperson*
Eugene Braunwald
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