



**PROFESSOR ALBERT TRILLAT, MD  
(1910–1988)**

Albert Trillat, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery and Traumatology, was a great person, and thus, as would be expected, was an outstanding orthopaedist. He was born and educated in Lyon, served as orthopaedist with the French Forces in their Vietnam War, and was tending to French and German wounded when Rommel came through his army hospital, congratulated him on his fine work, and instructed him to continue his services to both. Later, with times a bit more relaxed, he participated in the sports of race car driving and golf, but mostly worked diligently in orthopaedics, becoming Chief (Professor) at Lyon University. Here he taught his students, residents, and fellow unselfishly. He had become known for his treatment of athletes and the knee, although in 1967 I saw him beautifully perform a hip osteotomy and other general orthopaedics. When socialization first began and demanded his full time at the state hospital, he disagreed with the concept and resigned. Soon thereafter, because of his qualities and leadership, he was recalled to become professor and allowed to simultaneously maintain appropriate time for his private clinic and surgery.

Earlier on, he saw the probabilities and possibilities of improving the quality of orthopaedic care through subspecialization of orthopaedics. He sent his "men" here, there, and yonder to train in subspecialties of the spine, hand, and for broadening their knowledge of the knee and athletes.

I think it was somewhere around 1965 that he was a guest speaker in the USA, in Los Angeles. At the banquet they served beaujolais in his honor and he toasted the gathering for this salutation. He told me that he did not tell them that beaujolais would not travel even from Beaujolais to Lyon. He demonstrated this belief later at the first meeting of the International Society of the Knee in Lyon by transporting the attendees to the Congress by bus from Lyon to Beaujolais for the last night social finale. At the time of his 1965 visit to the States, because of his special interest in the knee, he visited Don O'Donoghue. A life-long deep friendship developed, and Albert held Don in an honored position forever thereafter.

In 1967 Don O'Donoghue, Don Slocum, and I undertook a trip to observe orthopaedics of the knee in Europe. O'Donoghue returned home before we reached France, but directed us to Albert Trillat. At that moment everything in France

was closed; De Gaulle had called a general strike. Airplanes could not even fly over or into France. Thus we approached by way of Switzerland. There were almost no automobiles on the roads, and all general gas stations were closed. When we arrived at the Orthopaedic Department, there was a bus that had collected many patients to bring them to the clinical seminar. A plumber was working on a scrub sink, and an electrician was working on an operating room light. I asked Albert how that could be with the complete general strike over all of France. I can't explain his answer in exactly his unique phraseology, but essentially he told me that he loved people, and they knew that if they needed him for their doctor that he would treat them.

Then we went into the auditorium for the clinical presentation of patients. With the bright, happy, and almost anxious faces of the staff and students sitting about, we had lively discussions and argumentations. Then, Albert, smiling proudly, explained to us that this was the only American-style "bull pen" in Europe where everyone was encouraged to openly challenge the professors. The give and take was most enthusiastic.

In 1970 we, the AAOS Committee of Sports Medicine, first had Professor Trillat as the visiting professor to a postgraduate course, which was chaired by Fred Behling in San Francisco. Afterwards, he flew home with me and stayed with us for a week or two. He was a charming and gracious person, always at home wherever he was, and he became one of the family. To our delight he returned almost annually to visit in our home for a week or so.

In 1972 I sent James Andrews (vicariously) to do a fellowship with Professor Trillat. In turn, Albert directed Aldo Moschi and Giancarlo Puddu (each had previously done a fellowship with him), and subsequently Chambat and Prudhomme, to do fellowships with us. At about the same time, Dick Tooth had directed Merv Cross to Columbus for a fellowship. These young men became interested in the concept of an international society of the knee. Albert Trillat was the key in Europe. Thus, I flew to Rome, met with Puddu and Moschi at the airport, and we flew on to Lyon to meet with Professor Trillat. Albert met the three of us that evening and with Henri Dejour, Pierre Chambat, and possibly others, he took us to dinner at Le Chapel, a most outstanding five star restaurant. Each of us thought we well knew Albert's exceptional taste for fine food and wine; however, that evening the dinner, the wine, and the service was something like none of us had ever seen before, nor have since. Then, with the discussions that had been ensuing, he announced that he would embrace the concept of an international society of the knee. I relate all of this to give you a little more personal insight to the kindness and loyalty of this gentleman; he finished his sentence of embracing the concept as follows: "...only if we ask Don O'Donoghue to be the first president and I'm allowed to put on a grand first congress here in Lyon in his honor."

Professor Albert Trillat will never be gone from us. His many interests and enthusiasms for life and his orthopaedics will always be a part of us.

—JCH