



Mr. Jaroslav Stark, MD, FRCS, FACS, FACC–The icon of World's paediatric cardiac surgery turned eighty



It is hard to believe that Jarda celebrated his 80th birthday. I was wondering how to describe him without using clichés and without annoying readers by boring storytelling. I think his own choice would be a less formal style of writing. Jarda belongs to a generation of surgeons which revolutionised paediatric cardiac surgery. There was nothing unexpected about his successful career; it was a case of pure talent and hard work on the part of a cardiac surgeon who devoted his forty productive years to children born with congenital heart disease, and who managed to develop his skills and reputation under the difficult conditions following the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 which resulted in Jarda's unplanned emigration to the United Kingdom.

Jarda's career began in the countryside of eastern Bohemia – in Nová Paka and Rychnov. Soon, in 1962, he was picked out by one of the giants of Czechoslovak paediatric surgery, Professor Václav Kafka; Jarda worked with him at the Paediatric and Cardiac Surgery Unit at Prague's Charles University until 1965. From there, it was only a "small" step to his lifelong professional love: paediatric cardiac surgery. At the end of the sixties, at the time of Alexander Dubček's 'socialism with a human face', Jarda received his first invitation from Mr. David Waterston to come to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London. This two-year fellowship at Great Ormond Street could not have been better scheduled: because in Prague's Motol Hospital, Milan Šamánek and his colleagues were almost ready with their own new paediatric cardiac centre, the sole and exclusive unit for treating all children in Czechoslovakia born with congenital heart disease. It happened almost simultaneously that Jarda brought his surgical skills honed at Great Or-

mond Street Hospital, whilst Milan, with his rich vision and enormous energy, was on his way back from a fellowship in Philadelphia. All seemed to be well set up for creating the Czechoslovak centre of excellence; this was in those days a unique approach to treating children with congenital heart disease. This excellent concept was sadly put on 'temporary' hold because of the Soviet invasion. A whole generation of physicians was impacted and many went into exile. So Jarda with his wife Olga and their son Jaroslav returned to Great Ormond Street in 1968, where he was to hold a consultant post right up until his retirement in 1999.

Jarda very quickly adapted to his new home and, in return, Great Ormond Street welcomed Jarda warmly and with respect. Jarda has gradually raised the quality of services, and later as the head of cardiothoracic services, he established Great Ormond Street as a magnet training center for aspiring young congenital heart surgeons from all corners of the globe. He early emphasized the importance of accountability, and application of quantitative tools to the analysis of pediatric cardiac surgical outcomes (with collaboration of his son Jaroslav jr, Professor of mathematics at Imperial College London). When Jarda appointed Marc de Leval, who later became one of the most gifted pioneers in paediatric cardiac surgery, he created an almost brotherly partnership. The Stark & de Leval 'duo' introduced and implemented a number of new surgical techniques, substantially changed the direction of research and developed educational programs in Europe. Not surprisingly, Jarda has to his name hundreds of publications, lectures and international awards, and perhaps it is senseless to start describing all in detail. His textbook (Stark J, de Leval M, Tsang V, *Surgery of Congenital Heart Disease*, 3rd ed, John Wiley & Sons, London 2006) belongs to the select few of recommended books for all paediatric cardiac surgeons worldwide and remains unsurpassed today.

Today, Jarda remains incredibly vital and active despite the sad loss of Olga and his son Jaroslav. Jarda I know is, however, tough and strong enough to overcome all these blows and misfortunes. Whenever I feel I need to restrain my proud cyclist ego, I invite Jarda for a round of golf at our neighbourhood club in Highgate, north London. It works. Jarda does not like losing. He will continue beating me for many, many years to come.

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Profesor Jaroslav Stark oslavil životní jubileum

Vážený pane profesore,

připojujeme se ke gratulaci pana profesora Jana Marka, který nesmírně citlivě popsal Vaši životní pouť a Vaše ohromné úspěchy na poli dětské kardiologie. Co však nebylo zmíněno, je Vaše dlouhodobá podpora českých lékařů – umožnil jste po řadu let vzdělávání českých pediatrů, dětských kardiologů na Vašem pracovišti v Londýně. Zásadním způsobem jste ovlivnil profesní i životní osudy mnoha z nás, kteří měli to štěstí, že se na stáž do Londýna dostali. Přispěl jste významně ke zvýšení

kvality péče o populaci českých dětí, které mají srdeční onemocnění. Patří Vám za to velký dík a věřím, že budete moci ještě dlouho prohánět Honzu Marka na golfovém hřišti. Ad multos anos!

Srdečně za výbor České kardiologické společnosti i za české děti, kterým jste léta přímo i nepřímo pomáhal!

Michael Aschermann