

Rene Favaloro. A life devoted to serve.

Rene Favaloro. Una vida consagrada al servicio.

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"I am positive that a change of direction can only be achieved through education."

René Favaloro.

René Geronimo Favaloro was born in the city of La Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina on July 12, 1923. He was the son of Juan Manuel Favaloro, a carpenter, and Ida Raffaelli, a dressmaker. He grew up in a poor neighborhood called El Mondongo, predominantly inhabited by immigrants in Argentina. He was known not only for his sense of justice, humility, and solidarity but also for leaving behind a globally recognized scientific legacy.

He attended elementary school in a modest school in his neighborhood, where, with few resources, learning was encouraged through participation, duty, and discipline. After school, he spent afternoons in the carpentry shop of his cabinetmaker father, who taught him the secrets of the trade. In the summers, he became just another worker. Thanks to his parents -his mother was a skilled seamstress- he learned to value work and effort.

In 1936, after a rigorous exam, Favaloro entered the National College of La Plata. There, teachers like Ezequiel Martínez Estrada and Pedro Henríquez Ureña instilled in him solid principles with a deep humanistic base. Beyond the knowledge he acquired, he incorporated and strengthened ideals such as freedom, justice, ethics, respect, the search for truth, and social participation, which had to be achieved with passion, effort, and sacrifice.

Favaloro, after graduating from high school, automatically entered the Faculty of Medical Sciences of the National University of La Plata after an elaborate decision. During his third year, he began attending the Polyclinic Hospital, and with those visits, he began to gain practice with patients. After graduating from Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Argentina in 1949, René Geronimo Favaloro worked in Argentina until 1961, when he moved to Cleveland, OH, United States, home of the leading cardiology clinic. It would be there that, driven by his training and passion for heart-related medicine, he had the means to study the possibility of using the saphenous vein for coronary surgeries. In 1962, at 40, he became a surgical resident at Cleveland Clinic Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgical Unit. Through hard work and dedication, he eventually became a staff surgeon. During his career, he collaborated with Dr. Mason Sones to introduce the innovative technique of coronary artery bypass graft on May 9, 1967.

Favaloro commented: *"The first surgery was a bit accidental. That patient had severe heart disease and had seen the Mirtha Legrand program, where he was a guest. The man had chest pains, he had no social work and he remembered that he had commented that we were going to operate and he came. He arrived at the emergency room with chest pain, and we decided to operate on him right away. He was not planned, but we had to start that day."*

He returned to Argentina in 1971 with the idea of establishing

a center that combined medical care, research, and education. With that goal in mind, the Favaloro Foundation was founded in 1975. Five years later, in 1980, he founded the Basic Research Laboratory associated with Favaloro Foundation Department of Research and Education. In 1992, Favaloro Foundation Institute of Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery was inaugurated in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Afterwards, it became the Institute of Basic Sciences Research of the Favaloro Institute of Biomedical Sciences, which eventually became the Biomedical Sciences Teaching Institute. In August 1998, this educational process ended with the creation of Favaloro University.

René Favaloro was a prolific writer who authored several books, including "Surgical Treatment of Coronary Atherosclerosis" (1970), "Recuerdos de un Médico Rural" (1980), "¿Conoce Usted a San Martín?" (1986), "La Memoria de Guayaquil" (1991), "De La Pampa a los Estados Unidos" (1992), and "Don Pedro y la Educación" (1994). Additionally, he wrote over 500 papers on his specialty. Favaloro was an active member of 24 medical societies, a corresponding member of 4, and an honorary member of 42. Over the course of his life, he performed more than 15,000 myocardial revascularization surgeries.

Tragically, Favaloro made the fateful decision to take his own life on Saturday, July 29, 2000, at his home in Buenos Aires, with a gunshot to the heart. The tragic decision was reportedly the result of severe depression due to economic and financial difficulties faced by the Foundation he presided over, aggravated by the lack of sensitivity and responses on the part various medical entities, both public and private, which had unpaid debts in the amount of eighteen million dollars with his institution.

Awards and honors

- The John Scott Award in 1979, grante by the city of Philadelphia, PA, United States.
- The creation of the "Dr. René G. Favaloro" Chair of Cardiovascular Surgery at Tel Aviv University, Israel, 1980.
- Honors from the Conchita Rábago de Giménez Díaz

Foundation in Madrid, Spain, 1982.

- The Maestro of Argentine Medicine Award, 1986.
- The Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, 1987.
- The Gairdner Foundation International Award granted by the Gairdner Foundation in Toronto, Canada, 1987.
- The René Leriche Award in 1989 granted by the International Society of Surgery.
- The Gifted Teacher Award, granted by the American College of Cardiology, 1992.
- The Golden Plate Award from the American Academy of Achievement, 1993.
- The Prince Mahidol Award, presented by His Majesty the King of Thailand in Bangkok, Thailand, 1999.

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