## Dr John W. McLean: Tribute to a Pioneer

Talking to Dr John McLean is always a pleasure. Writing about him is a privilege as John's story marks the development of much of today's restorative dental techniques and materials, and his adolescence is redolent in British history. As a member of the choir, and later as head chorister, of Westminster Abbey, he attended the funeral of famed author Rudyard Kipling, celebrated British general Lord Allenby, Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald, and the Lying in State of King George V.

"Good training for an undertaker," he noted, "But I had no ambitions in that direction!" John also participated in the ceremony proclaiming Edward VIII King at St. James Palace, and the service for the Coronation of George VI, for which John's godfather, Sir Walford Davies, composed some of the music. Later in life he came to know playwright George Bernard Shaw, as well as Sir Norman Bennett, of Bennett Movement fame.

He had intended to study medicine but, by chance, became interested in the acrylic resin dentures in between premedical studies during a holiday job at a dental laboratory. John decided to study dentistry and was accepted as a student at Guy's Hospital, London, England, where he proceeded to win the Dental Society prizes for 1946, 1947, 1948, as well as the prestigious Newland-Pedley Gold Medal for Operative Dentistry. While at Guy's, John was greatly influenced by Professor Martin Rushton, a brilliant and internationally renowned pathologist. Later on John published, under Rushton's guidance, the first paper identifying odontoblast aspiration in dentinal tubules. Alan Thompson, an ingenious and superb clinician, instilled in John the seeds of clinical excellence. Later, while serving as a Lecturer at the Eastman Hospital, London, he worked with Professor Ivor Kramer, another deep and original thinker. Together they published a paper on the effect of glycerophosphoric acidbased adhesives (Sevriton Cavity Seal) on dentine. This was the first of such papers on the formation of the hybrid layer using a self-etching primer, appearing some 4 years before Buonocore's landmark paper.

John's work, along with colleague Harry Hughes of the Warren Spring Laboratory, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom, on high-strength alumina ceramics resulted in the marketing of aluminous porcelain (Vitadur) and high-alumina ceramics that are only now, some 30 years later, becoming widely used.

John is never stinting with his praise for other scientists who have made seminal contributions. He feels privileged to have worked with such pioneers as Pierre Castan, who in 1937 developed epoxy resins from which dental composite resins advanced; Oskar Hagger, known for his work in bonding acrylic resins to tooth structure; Eric Schmitt and Robert Purrmann, who researched lowviscosity epimine resins; and Dennis Smith, pioneer of chemical adhesion of polyacrylic acids to tooth structure.

John's eyes lit up when asked for advice to young researchers and, in characteristic manner, he proclaimed, "Do not become frustrated if your ideas are rejected. Stick to your beliefs, they often mature later in life. The famous Barnes Wallis once remarked that 'half the joy in life is the fight, not the consequent success.' This was so true with my work on glass ionomers with Alan Wilson in the laboratory of the Government Chemist. Persistence was eventually rewarded."

John is as proud of his work as a dental practitioner as of his innovative research. He was president of the British Dental Association, has served on the General Dental Council, and has been consulting professor to the Dental School at Louisiana State University, New Orleans, Louisiana, for some 20 years.

He was awarded the O.B.E. (Order of the British Empire) in 1978 for his outstanding contributions to dental research, and since then has received international acclaim and numerous awards. His Doctorate of Science is an exceptionally rare accolade. He received the Prosthetic Research Award in 1981 from the International Association for Dental Research, as well as the Wilmer Souder Award for dental materials in 1984. He was awarded the John Tomes Prize for Research by the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1981. John's publications and textbooks that have become standard works are well-known. He has a thoroughly well-deserved reputation as an international lecturer.

John has never allowed his immense achievements to detract from his family life, an achievement of which he is proud. Outside dentistry he is a keen gardener, sometimes exhibiting his work at the Royal Horticultural Society, where he has won many silver medals. Whatever John does is always done to a remarkable standard.

John McLean remains an inimitable character and an icon to future generations. We salute you and wish you long life!

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