



## **Journey's End**

### **Dr John W. McLean**

OBE, DSc, DOdont (Lund) MDS (Lond), FDS, RCS (Eng), FKC

**1925–2009**

**J**ohn Walford McLean, clinical scientist of world renown and icon of prosthodontics, passed away peacefully in his home on June 29th. With characteristic courage and good humor, he had fought a long battle against a debilitating disease. His mobility had suffered but his razor-sharp intellect, spontaneous wit, and gracious manner never faltered. Indeed, just a few weeks before he had recounted with his mischievous grin that his orthopedic surgeon, intending to rebuild John's vertebra with acrylic resin, had helpfully informed him, "That's a sort of plastic, you know."

A mere 4 years ago some of John's many achievements were acknowledged in this journal in an effort to underscore his extraordinary legacy to the dental profession. His adolescence was redolent in British history. During a holiday job he became interested in the first ICI acrylic resin dentures and decided to study dentistry rather than medicine. At Guy's Hospital he won numerous prizes and published the first paper identifying odontoblast aspiration in dentinal tubules. Later, at the Eastman Hospital and together with Kramer, he published a work on the effect of glycerophosphoric acid-based adhesives (Sevriton Cavity Seal) on dentin. That was the first paper on the formation of the hybrid layer, some 4 years before Buonocore's landmark paper. His work with Harry Hughes of the Warren Spring Laboratory on high-strength alumina ceramics resulted in aluminous porcelain (Vitadur) and high-alumina ceramics. Never stinting with praise for other scientists, John felt privileged to have worked with Dennis Smith, the pioneer of chemical adhesion of polyacrylic acids to the tooth structure.

John was president of the British Dental Association, served on the General Dental Council, and was a consulting professor to the Dental School

at Louisiana State University for some 20 years. Of his numerous awards, his Doctorate of Science is an exceptionally rare accolade. For his outstanding contributions to dental research, he was made Order of the British Empire in 1978. The International Association for Dental Research awarded him the Prosthetic Research Award in 1981 and the Wilmer Souder Award for dental materials in 1984. He was granted the John Tomes Prize for Research by the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1981. This year, the American Prosthodontic Society bestowed on him their Golden Medallion. He enjoyed a thoroughly well-deserved reputation as an international lecturer while his century of publications and beautifully produced textbooks have become standard works.

John's immense accomplishments did not detract from his family life. While terms such as "hydrolytic instability," "static fatigue," and "thermal diffusivity" flowed effortlessly, few conversations failed to mention at least one of his four daughters or his wife, Diana, who predeceased him in 1999. John was a keen gardener, exhibiting at the Royal Horticultural Society and winning many silver medals. John's eclectic range of interests included fine wines, gourmet food, and an endless tweaking of his golf swing.

John was a mentor and friend to a wide circle. The young (and not so young) who sought his advice could be assured of practical and kind guidance. He had little time for posers or those with inflated egos. John was the epitome of a gentleman who delighted in being politically incorrect. We are all much the poorer for his loss.

Harold Preiskel and Nairn Wilson

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