

In Memoriam

Peter Dolphin: A Remembrance

Peter Dolphin, a great friend and supporter of the CSBMCB, died suddenly on Friday, June 22, 2001 at the age of 54. His mother died of a heart attack on the same day 10 years earlier. Peter had been feeling unwell for about a week but refused to consider that it could be anything serious. Barb Bigelow, the departmental secretary, didn't agree and persuaded him to go to the Emergency Clinic on Monday. He was admitted to the hospital right away and was told that he had already had a mild heart attack. By Thursday, he seemed much better and complained that he was bored, asked for visitors and especially wanted to see data from the lab. Then suddenly on Friday morning he suffered cardiac arrest and couldn't be revived. Word spread quickly. His daughter Fiona and his sister Alex flew over from England and the funeral, in beautiful old St. Paul's Church, was packed with colleagues and friends from many walks of life.

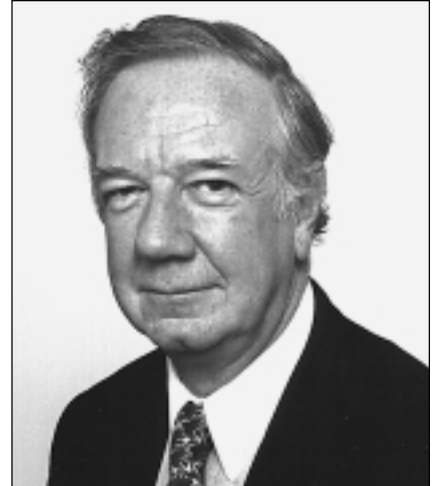
We are all finding it difficult to fully imagine life without Peter. He had been at Dalhousie since 1978 and was very active in all aspects of life in biochemistry, in our department, in the university, in Canada and indeed in the world. At the time of his death he was Secretary General of PABMB and treasurer of the IUBMB. He loved to travel and had been to Chile and Brazil several times in connection with PABMB business. One of his goals was to increase interactions between Canadian and South American biochemists and students. Peter was instrumental in securing the huge IUBMB meeting for Toronto in 2003. He went to Tokyo for a meeting of the IUBMB executive and made all of the right arguments. Recently, he was involved in several planning functions for the IUBMB meeting, including the Scientific Program Committee. Peter was active in the former Canadian Biochemical Society in various capacities in the 1980s and early 90s, and in 1996 was president of its expanded successor, the CSBMCB. Later he served as president of the CFBS. He also was Regional Director for the MRC/CIHR in the Maritime Provinces (1998-2001). In this role, he helped many local applicants and grantees with funding issues. For his own research in the area of lipoprotein metabolism, Peter always held grants from

MRC/CIHR, as well as from the Heart and Stroke Foundation. He was very involved in peer review and in research policy development for these and other organizations.

Peter had many honours undergraduate and graduate students in his laboratory over the years and was a true mentor to them. One student in particular was a quiet young Malaysian woman who did her honours project in my lab. Eve Teh was terrific at the bench but hesitated about graduate school. Peter could see that she had a real talent for research and persuaded her to join his lab. In the following four years, Peter taught Eve lipoprotein metabolism in all its arcane detail and Eve introduced molecular biology into Peter's lab and cloned a novel mutant gene for cholesteryl ester transfer protein (CETP). Her work won a number of prizes and she is now a CIHR fellow at UBC in Ross McGillvary's lab, doing beautiful structure-function studies on transferrin.

Eve won the Patrick Prize, given by retired faculty member Syd Patrick, for a Ph.D. thesis judged to have had the most impact in the previous two years. She flew here last March for a seminar and presentation of the prize. Peter put on a wonderful party for her. He cooked for days, then donned a French Chef's outfit and served delicious international cuisine to all of us!

Peter liked teaching and often referred to his role model for the ideal biochemistry teacher, Prof. Muhammad Akhtar at the University of Southampton in England. Peter did his undergraduate work in honours physiology and biochemistry at Southampton followed by his Ph.D. in Akhtar's lab, finishing in 1971. I was a postdoctoral fellow in Akhtar's lab at the same time, along with 13 students from all over the world. It was a great place. Akhtar was so dynamic, and full of ideas. He was basically a steroid chemist, but already in 1968 he was intrigued by the notion of using molecular biology to sort out



Peter Dolphin



Peter and Eve Teh at the party celebrating the awarding of the Patrick Prize (March 2001)

steroid hormone action. Akhtar talked to every one of his students every day and loved a good argument. But he was always encouraging and helpful. I could see many of Akhtar's mentoring qualities emerge in Peter over the years. Peter really was interested in students, and not just his own students either. After his funeral, several graduate students from other labs told me stories about how he had helped them in important ways in scientific as well as personal matters. He always took part in student-sponsored activities, and, as an excellent pool-player himself, he organized a popular annual pool tournament for graduate students.

Peter was very pleased to receive a D.Sc. in recognition of his research from the University of Southampton in 1989, and looked splendid at convocations here wearing the red and blue D.Sc. robes. He always enjoyed celebrations, such as a special dinner at Southampton in Akhtar's honour on his retirement in 1998 with about sixty of Akhtar's former students and fellows in attendance. Another special occasion for Peter that I remember

particularly well was the CBS annual dinner in 1988 in Quebec City. The Nobel Laureate, Dorothy Hodgkin, had given the first Jeanne Manery Fisher award lecture and was the guest of honour. Peter had always admired Dorothy's many accomplishments in biochemistry and was delighted to have a good long conversation with her about science and politics. I know he especially liked the attached photo of Dorothy and himself.

I have mentioned Peter's generosity with students but I also remember many examples of kindness with his colleagues. He could be generous with his time, ideas, practical technical help and money. A young female colleague has told me that Peter's advice and encouragement were often helpful and that he seemed to have special empathy for younger researchers with family responsibilities. He pushed for more protected research time for young faculty members. And he was kind to older colleagues as well: when I lost grant funding for a while in the mid 90s, Peter found some travel money for me to attend an important conference.

Peter liked to fix things and especially to build small instruments, models for the lab and for home and beautifully finished wooden toys for his children. When Carl Breckenridge moved from department head to the associate deanship, Peter built a very funny model commemorating Carl's early days. He also was an accomplished tailor and made silk-lined ties and vests of every hue and pattern. Waiters at a local restaurant wore his splendid vests and many of us bought his ties for Christmas presents. My son has one with flying cats on it. Peter's own wardrobe often elicited comment, especially the bright pink shirt worn with an equally bright tie and matching handkerchief.

Peter was a very loyal person and was quick to defend colleagues, institutions and programs that he valued. When graduate programs at Dalhousie were threatened, with what many of us in biochemistry considered an ill-considered proposal for reorganization, Peter's response was classic. I can't quote it here, but he said what he thought and it was certainly colourful, as well as effective. He could always be counted on for an honest, forthright opinion. Although he had a lot of opinions, he wasn't doctrinaire and, like Akhtar, loved a good argument. And he loved to laugh.

It was obvious at Peter's funeral that he had friends from many diverse communities in Halifax. In addition to many academics, there also were friends from the world of theatre and costume de-



Dorothy Hodgkin and Peter at the CBS banquet in June, 1988, Quebec City

sign, fellow kite enthusiasts, associates from the Liberal party, pool-players and golfers and many of his son Michael's school friends.

Fiona and Michael buried their father's ashes next to his mother's grave in Sutton Coldfield in England last month. They had a gathering at a local golf club with family and Peter's long term collaborator and good friend from Paris, John Chapman. Some champagne was drunk: Fiona says that Peter would have approved.

The department has established a Peter Dolphin Memorial Fund to provide a graduate student award. Donations may be made payable to Dalhousie University and sent to the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, B3H 4H7.

– Catherine Lazier
Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology,
Dalhousie University

Kenneth Percy Strickland

(August 19, 1927 - August 28, 2000)

Dr. H. B. Stewart and E.R. Tustanoff

It is with sadness we relate to our membership that one of our Society's devoted and long standing members passed away after suffering from Alzheimer's. Dr. Ken Strickland served our Society well. He was a member of the Board as a Councillor from 1972 to 1975, and then took on the onerous task as Society Treasurer from 1978 to 1981.

Kenneth (Ken) enrolled in Honours Chemistry at the University of Western Ontario in 1945, completed his degree in 1949, and proceeded in graduate study in the Chemistry Department to complete his Master's degree in 1950. He then joined Roger Rossiter in the Department of Biochemistry and, with some innovative research involving the incorporation of radioactive phosphorus into neurological tissues and tissue fractions, he finished his Ph.D. in 1953. He then gained two years experience in the laboratories of R.H.S. Thompson in Guy's Hospital Medical School in London, England. He returned to his London (Canada) department as Assistant Professor, supported for two years by a Lederle Medical Faculty award. This support was followed by a National Research Council and later a Medical Research Council Research Associateship as an Associate Professor (1962) and Full Professor (1966). This support continued until 1979 when the Medical Research Council created the Career Investigator post, which he held until 1990. In 1971-72 he spent a year at the John Curtin School of Medical Re-

search, Australia National University and later returned for five months in 1976. The University of Western Ontario granted him tenure in 1989 and he remained on staff until 1993 when he was awarded Emeritus status.

Ken willingly accepted various academic responsibilities outside his research activities. He contributed substantially to the Medical Programme and, when the Honours Biochemistry programme was established, played a major role in the first survey course of the discipline as well as supervision of senior students in various projects. He was eagerly sought after as a supervisor in the Graduate Faculty. Seven Doctoral and six Masters candidates successfully completed their degree programmes under his supervision. Beyond these activities he acted as an external examiner of doctoral students, was a referee on various publications and served as a site visitor on several occasions.

Ken's service to his University was distinguished. As an undergraduate he was interested in athletics and as a faculty member he became a member of the Athletic Directorate for eight years



(President for two years). He served on the Senate and on committees including the Library Council and the Advisory Committee on the Health Aspects in the use of Ionizing Radiation. Within the Faculty, he served on the Admissions Committee, the Long Range Planning Committee and in his own Department he served as Acting Chairman for two years as well as on the Promotion and Tenure Committee, the onerous Graduate Studies Committee and others.

From the mid-fifties until he retired, his research was supported by the National Research Council and the Medical Research Council. Following the pioneering work with the incorporation of radioactive phosphorus into phospholipids he expanded his investigations into an examination of the steps in the biosynthesis and degradation of individual phospholipids containing glycerol and inositol. Coupled with these studies was an examination of the metabolic consequences of muscle denervation. This aspect of the work led to studies in normal and myopathic (UM-X7.1) hamsters and L-6 rats. In medical terms these observations provided models for the investigation of demyelinating diseases and the abnormalities observed in muscular dystrophy. In all, with the help of 13

graduate students and five post-doctoral fellows, Ken produced a total of 84 refereed journal articles and seven chapters in books.

In private life, Ken married Isabel and they had four children (three girls and one boy). After the death of Isabel, Ken married Mary with whom he remained until his death. He was a very devoted family man and deeply involved with his children. Every summer an extended camping trip to some remote part of Canada or to the States was intricately planned and of course the family summer cottage was a stated venue.

Ken was a warm and compassionate person – he will be missed by all his student colleagues and friends. He was always ready to pitch in and help and at times was taken advantage of because of his empathy for people. He was a very religious person and very much involved in his parish. He served as a lay preacher and was instrumental in planning and building a new church. He was not evangelistic and if you did not have access to his private life, you would never know he was so deeply involved with his religion. As a quiet and unassuming person Ken Strickland has made his mark on Biochemistry at Western.