

## Professor Roger John Anderson

'Andy' Anderson, as he was almost universally known, was at the height of a long and distinguished career when the illness which led to his death returned in mid 1998. Andy was, at that time, John Humphreys Professor of Dental Public Health and Director of the School of Dentistry in the University of Birmingham, a member of the Standing Dental Advisory Committee to the Secretary of State for Health, and was due to become national president of the BDA in the year 2000. The profession and the Association, of which he was a devoted supporter, lost a most valuable member and scientist when Andy eventually succumbed to his illness in March 1999. The Association was able to award the Tomes Medal at his home shortly before his death, a gesture which he much appreciated.

Andy graduated from the Royal Dental Hospital, University of London, in 1962 and immediately went into that part of dentistry in which he was to make his career and international reputation. Appointed as assistant lecturer (dental epidemiology) in the Department of Children's Dentistry at the Royal, he became a close associate of Peter James. When, in 1966, Peter moved to Birmingham as Professor of Dental Health, Andy moved with him as lecturer in his new department.

The subject of Andy's PhD thesis was the relationship between dental conditions, soil and water, and it was completed shortly after his move to Birmingham. This interest was to remain with him for the whole of his career, as did a fascination with computers as a tool for handling epidemiological data. We now take for granted the dental health improvements seen since the 1960s which Andy's landmark paper<sup>1</sup> of 1981 documented and in which he advocated that the then long-standing maxim 'if in doubt, fill' should be changed to 'if in doubt, wait'. In 1983, by then as senior lecturer at Birmingham, Andy was awarded his second doctorate, a DDS with honours.

Following the retirement of Peter James in 1988, Andy succeeded him as John Humphreys Professor. Shortly afterwards he was appointed as Deputy Director of the School of Dentistry, followed in 1994 by his appointment as Director and Head of School, a post held until shortly before his death.

Andy's academic responsibilities did

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not deter him from the world of dental service planning and provision. He and Peter James established the postgraduate course in Birmingham leading to the Diploma in Dental Health, the precursor of the Master of Community Dental Health degree. The DDH, started in the late 1960s, was a seminal course for aspirants to dental management positions in the NHS. Many of those who now hold the most senior positions in dental public health and in community dental services management were products of the Birmingham course. Like most other people who knew Andy, they remember not only his expertise in his chosen field but also the trademark braces and blue cardigan.

Andy's contribution to the development of the specialty of dental public health cannot be overstated. He was founding honorary secretary of the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry in 1973 and worked tirelessly to establish an association which is now recognised world-wide in its field and which is the specialist society for dental public health. He became president of that association in 1979-80.

He still found much time to give to the British Dental Association, both locally

and at national level. He was president of the Central Counties Branch and then went on to be branch treasurer and a branch representative to the Representative Board for many years. He was also active in the University Dental Teachers and Research Workers Group and was a member of the Dental Health and Science Committee.

That Andy was able to give so much to the profession is a tribute to his ability, energy and vision. It is also due to the very happy and rewarding home life which meant so much to him. He met Margaret whilst they were undergraduates in London. They had two daughters, Rosie and Cathy, of whom he was exceptionally proud.

Andy would have served the Association with distinction as president in the year 2000. It is a tragedy for the profession that this did not come to pass. He will be remembered with affection as a leading public health scientist, teacher, mentor, friend, and devoted family man.

### JWL and JFB

<sup>1</sup> Anderson R J. The changes in the dental health of 12-year-old school children in two Somerset schools. A review after an interval of 15 years. *Brit Dent J* 1981; 150: 218-221.