

Obituary

Obituaries should be submitted by email to Jadene Doak at jadene.doak@springernature.com

All submitted obituaries should be 400 words maximum in length (apart from obituaries for past presidents of the BDA where the length should be 800 words).

Content of the obituary is down to the individual author, and the approval of the family should be given for the obituary prior to submission to the *BDJ*.



Dame Margaret Seward DBE CBE

1935–2021

Felicity Bridget Oldershaw was born in Weymouth on 5 August 1935. Aged two years she was adopted by John Hutton Mitchell, a dentist, and his wife Marion. Renamed Margaret Helen Elizabeth, she then lived in Enfield, Middlesex. To the world, she became a leading dentist, but she was also a mother, grandmother and a friend to many.

Margaret was educated at her beloved Latymer School in Edmonton, North London, where she was head girl and chairwoman of its governors. She graduated from the London Hospital Dental School in 1959. In 1962, she married Gordon Seward and obtained her FDS. Margaret was the London's first female resident dental house surgeon, then senior hospital dental officer at Highlands Hospital, locum consultant at Chase Farm and North Middlesex hospitals and a community dental officer. For many years, she was an honorary lecturer in the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at the London. Her 1970 MDS thesis was on complications associated with deciduous teeth eruption. At the British Postgraduate Medical Federation, Margaret researched difficulties experienced by women returning to work, an interest throughout her life.

In March 1979, with two young children, Margaret became the only woman editor of the *BDJ*. To gain non-dental knowledge, she studied journalism at the London College of Printing and Management at Middlesex Polytechnic. In a sign of strong will, Margaret persuaded the Association to provide proper staff and office space. She conducted a readership survey to consider

improvements and changed the small journal into an A4 glossy with a six-colours cover, more attractive to GDPs, with articles on practice management, product news and subjects unrelated to dentistry. Income for the loss-making journal came from increased advertising, popular overseas dental tours, study days and publishing money-spinner books. Margaret introduced continuing education initiatives, including 'BDJ Teach-ins' and 'How to get published' seminars. 'Teamwork' was a distance-learning programme to help dentists train their nurses, with financial support for them and subsequent programmes from the four health departments. Margaret became editor of the *International Dental Journal*, remaining for ten years.

Aware of discrimination against female dentists, in 1985, Margaret explained the problem to Edwina Currie, the Minister for Health, and suggested a tailored course for returning them to practice. With a Departmental grant, she got the London to run a programme which became a model for other courses.

In 1993, Margaret assumed the BDA's presidency, 47 years after Lilian Lindsay. She had previously served as President of the Middlesex & Hertfordshire branch and Women in Dentistry. She was the second female Vice-Dean of the English Faculty of Dental Surgery and President of the Odontological Section of the Royal Society of Medicine.

In 1994, Margaret became the first female President of the General Dental Council (GDC) where she encouraged lifelong learning, introduced a 'recertification scheme' and 'specialist lists'. Margaret ensured GDC registration of all members of the dental team, to include the new clinical dental technicians and orthodontic therapists.

In 1999, Dame Margaret found many problems still faced female dentists. At the time, the NHS was undergoing a major

reorganisation. She was uniquely placed to advise on dentistry. Although already 'retired' to live in Bournemouth, she was head-hunted by the Department of Health to take forward the process of modernising NHS dentistry for the twenty-first century as its part-time Chief Dental Officer.

Post-retirement, Dame Margaret became chairwoman of the editorial board of *Women in Dentistry*, was Patron of Dorset Victim Support, a charity helping victims of crime, and President of the Bournemouth and Poole Medical Society. She was much involved with Richmond Hill St Andrew's United Reformed Church (URC) as secretary (chief elder), Editor of its magazine and led many reflections at the weekly 'Pause for Prayer'. More of her amazing life can be read in her autobiography, *Open Wide: Memoir of a Dental Dame*.

Not surprisingly, Dame Margaret was showered with honours, including: DSc Universities of Sheffield, Portsmouth, Plymouth; DDSc Newcastle; DDS Birmingham; FDS Edinburgh, Glasgow; FFGDP; FFPHM; FFARCS; MCCC; Colyer Gold Medal, RCS England; and Fellow Queen Mary & Westfield College. But her family and friends remember Margaret as a fun-loving person, not taking life too seriously. In 1994, she was honoured with a CBE, followed in 1999 by the prestigious appointment as a Dame. It is not surprising that the motto on her Heraldic Shield is: 'She who endures conquers'.

Dame Margaret Seward died on 22 July 2021. Her funeral service was held at Richmond Hill St Andrews URC on 9 August.

Margaret is very much missed by her beloved husband Gordon, son Colin, daughter Pamela, daughter-in-law Claire, grandchildren Jake and Zoe, godchildren Carol and David, niece Sue, and many dental friends around the world.

Stanley Gelbier