Obituaries should be submitted by email to Kate Maynard at k.maynard@nature.com.

All submitted obituaries should be approximately 350–450 words in length (apart from obituaries for past presidents of the BDA where the length should be 700–800 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.

LOMA MILES

Professor A. E. W. (Loma) Miles was a rare member of the dental profession: a polymath, visionary, scholar, scientist and humanitarian. Though he received many honours in his

long career, and was tenacious in fighting for scientific truth, for students and for patients, he deliberately kept a low profile in the profession. He was, however, held in the highest esteem by a scientific community well beyond dentistry.

Loma died in London – a world city he loved and knew intimately for almost a century – on 7 March 2008, in his 96th year. Born there in 1912, he qualified in medicine and then in dentistry from the Royal Dental Hospital. The story goes that he was the only one in his histopathology class to correctly diagnose a malignant myeloma, and was known to all as ‘Loma’ ever after.

As a passionate teacher, he was fundamental to the pre-eminence in the 1950s–1980s of the (then) London Hospital Medical College Dental School, recognising the importance of having professional educators involved in educational design, curriculum development and evaluation. He was an early adopter of student-centred learning, seeking to replace traditional lectures with small group discussions. As Professor of Dental Surgery and Pathology from 1950 to 1976 his department encompassed dental histology and pathology, oral pathology, oral medicine and periodontology, before a mitosis in the late 1960s. He influenced all these disciplines, developing innovative biopsy techniques, claiming to have

performed the first gingivectomy in Britain, and mentored generations of what were to become leading academics in all of these disciplines. Describing himself as an anatomist *manqué*, after ‘retirement’ in 1976 he became a full time teacher of anatomy for several years.

Loma always practised a multidisciplinary approach to research and collaborated with and became himself knowledgeable in zoology, biochemistry, physics, anatomy, pathology, epidemiology, archaeology, palaeontology – even modern cell and molecular biology. He drew graduate students from these backgrounds to his department, and mentored their academic careers for decades. His department was the source of a considerable brain drain to the USA, but remained strong whilst influencing the development of oral pathology in North America.

He was Curator of the Odontological Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, succeeding Sir Frank Colyer in the 1950s, serving until the early 1990s, defending it stoutly, improving its quality and facilitating its use as an educational and research resource.

He published continuously till the end of life. In forensic odontology, the ‘Miles method’ of ageing teeth from wear and apical translucency is standard. He wrote hundreds of scientific papers in the international refereed literature and always advocated that it was the duty of every scientist to communicate his/her results to a critical world. Thus, as Scientific Editor of the *BDJ* from 1947 to 1951, and as Editor in Chief of *Archives of Oral Biology* throughout the 1960s and 1970s, he set a standard of rigour unsurpassed before or since.

Perhaps his most important published legacies were the volumes *Structural and*

chemical organisation of teeth (1967); *Teeth and their origins* (1972), and a rewrite of Colyer and Sprawson’s 1936 *Variations and diseases of the teeth of animals* (1990, with Caroline Grigson).

He had a passionate interest in the archaeology of an early Christian burial site on the Outer Hebridean Island of Ensay where he spent many summers camping out in a deserted Victorian farmhouse, excavating and meticulously recording bones, describing their age and state of health. In later years this work was based at the Department of Palaeontology, The Natural History Museum, in Kensington, from which he published a series of detailed descriptive and interpretative papers.

A family tragedy in mid-life partly drove his compassion for others, and he took intense interest in the careers and lives of his many protégés, developing deep friendships with their children, and indulging in regular correspondence with many of them: he wrote beautifully and feelingly by hand and in type to the end.

In later years he was reluctant to appear in public because he did not want others to see him in his ‘physically enfeebled’ state. His physical deterioration was only modest, and his intellect remained intact. He was still making regular forays to museums and libraries – the Royal Society of Medicine being an essential resource. He retained an intense and active social conscience, latterly expressed as opposition to the war on Iraq, and was working on a history of the Royal Army Medical Corps at the time of his death.

A rare genius amongst our profession; a life well spent.

Newell Johnson