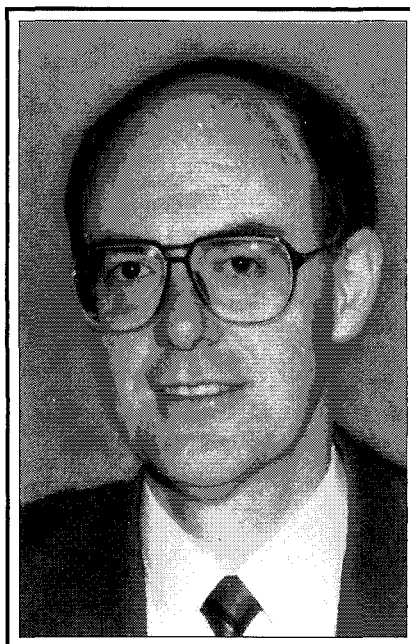


OBITUARY



ROBERT HUGH AITKEN
B.D.S.(Otago), M.D.Sc.(Melb.)
16.1.1944 - 16.2.1992

Hugh died peacefully in February after bravely enduring his illness for more than two years. He was born and grew up in Dunedin, New Zealand and followed a family tradition in the practice and teaching of dentistry for his father, Neville, who was a dental surgeon too. Neville had a private practice and in addition taught at the Otago Dental School. Dental connections also exist on his mother's side for Hugh's maternal grandfather (W.H. Naylor) founded the firm that constructed the Otago Dental School. Hugh had a wonderful pair of hands, he was a masterful wire-bender. An early indication of his hand steadiness was evidenced in secondary school where he was a member of the shooting team that won the Victory Challenge Shield competed for by South Island Schools. Embossed on the shield were the words "England expects that every man will do his duty", prophetic words in Hugh's case for he did fulfill his responsibilities to his profession. He attended Mornington Primary School followed by John McGlashan College. He studied at the Otago Dental School from 1963-1967 and during the university vacations engaged in a variety of jobs including employment in a paint factory and as a builder's labourer. After graduation Hugh worked for two years in the dental department of Lower Hutt Hospital, Wellington. He then went to Melbourne to study orthodontics.

After obtaining his M.D.Sc. in 1972 Hugh became a full-time member of the Orthodontic Department of The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne until 1982 when he established a private practice in Ringwood. He continued part-time work at The Dental Hospital until his illness became too restricting in March 1991, at which time he also sold his practice. Hugh taught the post-graduate students in orthodontics for many years and was selected as an examiner on several occasions, an indication of the esteem in which he was held. In addition, he was a regular presenter at continuing education orthodontic courses for general practitioners.

He was a member of the Australian Society of Orthodontists from 1973 and Table Clinics Co-ordinator for the

10th Congress of the A.S.O. in Melbourne in 1984. He was a founding member of the Melbourne Edgewise Study Group which existed from 1975-1986. His time as Assistant Editor of the Australian Orthodontic Journal (1980-1992) was one of Hugh's major contributions to his speciality. He brought to that position a comprehensive knowledge of the literature, an ability to focus on the essentials of a subject immediately, succinct expression and intellectual

integrity. Orthodontics was kind to Hugh. Not only did it provide him with stimulation and a livelihood but he also met his wife, Berris, when he was a post-graduate student and she was working in the Faculty Office.

Hugh was a gentle man, modest but not easily impressed and rarely overawed. He never made exaggerated statements, especially about his achievements. If Hugh was annoyed or disagreed he would make his feelings known. However, he never complained whether it was about work-related issues or his illness. Even during his illness he was always cheerful. I saw him seven days before he died. He was smiling and writing clever quips, even then. There was a group of dentists present some of whom, as is natural with any occupation, were saying that perhaps other professions were superior to dentistry. I asked Hugh whether he had ever regretted doing dentistry. Immediately he wrote — NEVER. Hugh had numerous interests which included food and wine, classical music (particularly Mozart, Haydn, Bach and Vivaldi) reading, vegetable gardening, photography and carpentry. He enjoyed travelling and visited Europe frequently. His favourite countries were Scotland, France, England and the South Island of New Zealand.

This accomplished human being will be sadly missed by his friends and colleagues. Berris, his wife and loyal companion, made him happy all his married life and looked after him devotedly during his illness. We all extend our sincere condolences to Berris, Hugh's mother Grace and his sister Margaret.

STANLEY JACOBS