

(Wednesday, August 02, 2006, 1:30:00PM -1:40:00 PM, Valencia A)

Memorial Lecture for Edward W. Webster, Ph.D.

By Robert O. Gorson

(Slide #1: In Memoriam)

We are attending this afternoon's symposium to honor the memory of one of our founding members and early AAPM president, Edward W. Webster. I am delighted that two members of his family were able to join us for this occasion, his wife, Dorothea and one of their sons, Peter. I would like to acknowledge their presence by asking Dorothea and Peter to stand for a moment. (Pause). Thank you Dorothea and Peter. **(Slide #2: Video clip of Ted)**

Edward W. Webster, better known to his friends and colleagues as "Ted", died on December 17, 2005 in a retirement facility in Bedford, MA. Ted will be remembered not only for his many outstanding scientific and professional achievements but also for his friendly, engaging smile and the twinkle in his eyes when he greeted you. Ted's expression in this video clip taken during an interview of Ted in 1992 was quite typical of Ted. He was the perfect English gentleman, a superb scholar, a renowned scientist and an eminent teacher who left big footprints in the radiological world. **(Slide #3: The Early Years)**

The son of a post office civil servant, Ted was born on April 12, 1922, the only male sibling of four, and raised in a working class district in London. His father, largely self-taught, inspired his son to achieve scholastic excellence and indeed Ted was often the best in his class. His 9th grade Math teacher teased him on one occasion by imitating Ted's cockney accent in class, provoking him to learn

how to properly speak the King's English, most important for his later career. Ted matriculated at the University of London after winning four scholarships. In 1943, during the battle of Britain, he received his B.Sc. degree in electrical engineering with First Class Honors. (Slide #4: Early Career)

The famous physicist/author, C.P. Snow, then director of Technical Manpower Department of England, directed Ted to return to the University of London for graduate work and research on cathode ray tubes. In early 1945, Snow reassigned Ted to do research in high voltage engineering at the English Electric Company. Meanwhile he completed his thesis and received his Ph.D. the following year. His work on the design and construction of two Van der Graaff accelerators prompted Ted's decision to pursue postdoctoral research with Professors Van de Graaff and John Trump at MIT.

In 1949, Ted won a traveling fellowship from the London Council to spend a year at MIT, where he took nuclear physics courses under Robley Evans and colleagues. There he met his first love, Irene Henry, whom he married in 1951. With an emigration visa Ted extended his Boston sojourn two years as a research assistant with John Trump and working on high energy radiation dosimetry at the joint MIT-Lahey Clinic. (Slide #5: Later Career)

Returning to England in 1952 with Irene, Ted took a position as lecturer at the University of London. Uncertain about what career to pursue, he considered the nuclear power industry, medicine, and even Law. Fortunately for medical physics, his previous mentor at MIT, John Trump, steered Ted to a new position in medical physics at MGH. Returning. Upon Trump's recommendation, Dr. Robbin,

chief of radiology at MGH, invited Ted to join his staff even without an interview! Ted began working at MGH with the chief of radiation oncology, Dr. Milford Schulz, on November 1, 1953, as the only clinical physicist in the department. Thus began a brilliant career in medical physics that would continue for 47 years until his retirement in January 2001.

Ted's clinical activities, initially in radiation oncology physics, gradually encompassed diagnostic radiology physics. In 1970, when radiation oncology became a separate department, Ted was named director of the Radiological Sciences Division of Diagnostic Imaging, a position he retained until his retirement.

(Slide #6: Some Awards and Honors)

Ted's voluminous Curriculum Vitae documents an amazing career of outstanding achievements. His many honors include the Gold Medal of the American College of Radiology, the Coolidge Gold Medal of the AAPM and the Failla Award of the Radiological and Medical Physics Society of New York. He initiated the first night courses in radiologic physics for residents of the Boston area. He participated in or conducted numerous courses in the radiological sciences at universities, and medical schools in the Boston area. Ted was the invited lecturer for over 200 presentations and he was the author or co-author of over 130 publications. **(Slide #7: Some AAPM Activities)**

Ted, a charter member of the AAPM, served on the first board of directors and with John Hale, drafted the AAPM Constitution and Bylaws. He served as its fifth president in 1964 and established the Scientific Committee on Radiation Dosimetry.

Ted was certified in 1957 by the ABR and in the next year was appointed examiner in physics for the Board, on which he served in various capacities for 26 years. During this time he orally examined over 1250 radiologists and 230 physicists. Ted was an active participant on at least ten Committees of the American College of Radiology (ACR), including the Commission on Radiological Units, Standards and Protection on which he served 30 years!

(Slide #8: Service on Organizations)

For 32 years, Ted was a prodigious participant on many Committees of the National Council on Radiation Protection, from 1961 to 1993; chairing two, a member of 7 others and 8 years on the Board of Directors. In 1992, Ted delivered the 16th annual Taylor Lecture on Dose and Risk in Diagnostic Radiology.

Ted served on many committees of various U.S. governmental agencies. Perhaps best known were his services on the BEIR-III Committee. He and Harold Rossi made a strong case against extrapolating radiation effects from high doses to doses below 10 rads. Ted also served on numerous committees of at least seven international organizations.

Ted and his two very young sons suffered a tragic loss in 1956 when his first wife and their mother died of complications of diabetes at age 34. Three years later on April 1, 1961 Ted met Dorothea Wood in California and they were married seven weeks later. Ted adopted her three children and later they had a daughter of their own. He is survived by Dorothea and six children, and six grandchildren.

Here are a couple more photos of Ted, (Slide #9) in 1971 during his first trip to America, (Slide #10) with son Ed, a famous mountaineer who had climbed Mt. Everest twice, and (Slide #11) with his wife, Dorothea in 1999.

(Slide #12: Coolidge Award Statement)

When Ted received the coveted Coolidge Award on August 2, 1983, during the Silver Anniversary Meeting of the AAPM, he stated how proud he was to be an American and how grateful he was for American generosity and for all of the opportunities that had been granted him over the years. His last remark was, “After this gala occasion tonight, I am looking forward intensely to the golden anniversary 25 years from now. I’ll only be 86 and with the help of medical physics, I might make it!”

Alas, that opportunity will not be granted. But his surviving friends and colleagues will certainly be honoring him on that day and for many years thereafter by recalling the big footprints Ted left as an English-turned-American Gentleman, renowned scholar and scientist, beloved teacher and mentor, loyal friend and colleague. (Slide #13: The AAPM.....)

The AAPM will forever be grateful that Ted chose America as his adopted country, medical physics as his life’s career, and the AAPM as his professional home.

(Slide #14: 1971 Photo of Ted) Thank you. Let’s all stand for a moment of silence to honor Ted’s memory. (Pause) Thank you.

Ref: Med Phys 33(4), April 2006, pp1180-81. Obituary: Edward W. Webster, Ph.D.

