

Addendum No. 2 to Old Morganians
NEWSLETTER No. 11, OCTOBER 2015
RE: JOHN CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE
EULOGY AT HIS FUNERAL, FRIDAY 29 MAY, 2015
By His Son J. Nigel Lawrence.

We are gathered here at what is a sad time, but it is also a time for remembering dad and his life. He was a wonderful and much loved husband, a respected and caring father to Jon and myself. He was adored by all his grandchildren: Beth, James, Jack and Emma Rose.

Mum and dad both grew up in and around the same local area in Somerset and they married in St Mary's Church, Bridgwater, in 1956. After the wedding they left Somerset to start married life in the West Midlands as a year earlier dad had started work in Birmingham. The rest, as they say, is history, as their two wonderful sons arrived to put the icing on wedding bliss. Those who knew dad would agree that he was kind, caring, sensitive and loyal person, who loved being in the company of other people and discussing shared interests. I have so many memories about dad as I was growing up and I will share one in particular that helps me reflect on his kind and sensitive character; obviously this is football related.

Dad might often like to sit and relax in his beloved armchair, but he was constantly disturbed to run us here and there, especially in our teenage years. His caring nature even extended to offering to drive me to and from football matches so that I could support my local football team. This was much to my amazement at the time as dad never had an interest in football and to be honest he really didn't like football at all. He never asked the score or any details about the game, but that didn't matter as I was just over the moon that he appreciated and cared just how much it meant to me to go to the games.

There are even a couple of things that I think I have learnt from, or acquired from, dad that have stood me well over the years. Firstly: never prejudge people, always accept them for who they are and treat them with the respect you would like to receive, as you never know who might turn out to be a good friend. The second is: always try your best and do what you feel to be the right thing, even if it is something you know you might not be naturally good at, or is a difficult decision.

Dad started at the Birmingham Accident Hospital in 1955 after leaving Birmingham University as a newly qualified Bacteriologist to work in the Burns Research Group. People who worked at the accident hospital all recognised and appreciated his personal qualities. They all regarded him as a trusted, respected and good friend and someone who at some point helped them in one way or another, whether it was advice or guidance, words of wisdom, or just how to repair or mend something. One of his friends referred to him as a true gentleman of science. That I think was a very apt phrase to describe dad.

It was obviously a rewarding research career for dad and he went on to run the group up until 'full time' was blown on the burns research group and the hospital itself. However despite all the research publications, various seminars, lectures and other professional accolades, I think the thing which was more important to him was all the people that he came to know during those years. He was still in contact with many of them decades after the demise of the hospital.

I had first-hand experience of just what life in the burns research group was for dad about the time I was in the last year or so of school and dad suggested I gain some work experience at the hospital. It was real eye opener for me and I got to see him in a different light. What struck me the most was that he was always discussing something with someone. Invariable the more in depth discussions were always accompanied by what I came to recognise as the obligatory cup of coffee, often accompanied by toast in the morning and cake in the

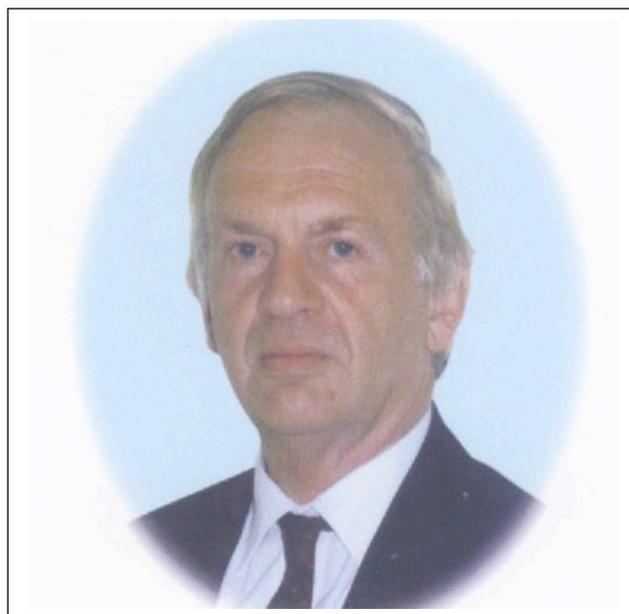
afternoon. In fact to my mind half the world's problems as well as the more pressing ones of the latest research or test results were discussed, analysed and put right over a cup of coffee. There was a real camaraderie within the unit and the hospital itself in those days as things were often done on trust, loyalty and goodwill. It was just such an environment that really suited dad down to the ground. One thing was certain to everyone who knew dad in those days was that the Accident hospital was the life and soul of his working life.

Even within the last month of his life when dad was speaking to me of some important family heirlooms or favourite possessions that he wished to remain in the family, he included 2 from the Accident hospital both of which were not presentations for work as such but were reflective of the mutual respect and admiration that he had for, and had received from, his friends. One was the commemorative coin which I think for dad just simply reminded him of those fond memories he had of the place and the people he knew. The other was a set of cufflinks that signified he was regarded as a honorary member of the surgical team – a simple honour among friends and one that he was still really chuffed about all those years later.

Even though dad had taken early retirement, this turned into semi-retirement as he then made the most of things and he carried on various research activities at the hospital in Llandough, Cardiff, for several years before eventually retiring. His retirement, which I will refer affectionately to as 'the pottering around years', saw dad carrying out various other forms of research which mainly involved clock repair, family history, local history of places where he had grown up or worked, such as Somerset, Wembdon, his old school Dr Morgan's, and of course the BAH. These were all things that were dear to his heart, kept his mind active, and never really regarded as complete, but more importantly maintained the friendship and contact with many friends from the past and present.

I think dad lived a long and full life and, although we are sad at his departure and we will from time to time miss him very much, we will always remember him with great love and affection. I hope that not only will he rest in peace but that he will forever potter around and enjoy that everlasting cup of coffee. We will always love you dad.

J. NIGEL LAWRENCE



John Christopher Lawrence 18.08.1933 – 28.04.2015