Obituary Notice

T. G. TAYLOR
(1919–1987)

Geoffrey Taylor, Emeritus professor of Applied Nutrition at Southampton University, died on 6 June 1987. It was an untimely death for someone just beginning to enjoy his retirement and to spend more time on the great loves of his life, his wife and family and his garden.

Educated at St Albans Grammar School, he read natural sciences at Downing College, Cambridge from where he graduated with an MSc. After a brief period working for the war Agricultural Department as an adviser in farming and food production, he trained as a Flying Officer in the RAF. At the end of the war he returned to an advisory post in the Ministry of Agriculture and married Francine who left the American forces to join him in England. His academic career began with a lectureship at Reading University where he was also able to complete his PhD and begin a productive period of research and scholarship. Nineteen years later he left to become chief biochemist at the Poultry Research Centre in Edinburgh. In 1969 he was appointed to the first Rank Chair of Applied Nutrition in the newly-founded Medical School in Southampton University. He was awarded an Emeritus Chair on his retirement in 1984.

Geoffrey Taylor will probably be best remembered by the Nutrition Society for his contributions towards the publications of the Society. As editor of the *British Journal of Nutrition* from 1970 to 1976, he did much to maintain the journal in its foremost position in the nutrition world. More recently, together with N. K. Jenkins, he edited the proceedings of the 13th International Congress of Nutrition, held in Brighton in 1985, and attained the apparently impossible, a high-quality comprehensive publication of the Congress proceedings within 12 months of the Congress.

While the edited publications may stand as monuments to his work for the Society, his scientific colleagues will remember him for his lifelong research in the field of avian nutrition, particularly in relation to calcium. His published work extended the understanding of Ca metabolism at all stages of the life-cycle of birds, from the yolk-sac through hatching to the mature egg-laying adult. He was one of the earliest scientists to utilize radioisotopes in biological research. In his early collaborative work with John Moore at Reading, he used ^{45}Ca and ^{32}P in experiments, designed to give present-day radiation officers apoplexy, to show the variation in Ca exchange in different parts of the bone and in different bones, i.e. labile and non-labile bone. They showed the importance of changes in Ca metabolism in medullary bone and their effect on storing Ca before egg laying and releasing Ca for egg-shell production. He provided evidence that these changes in bone reflected desorption of bone rather than demineralization. His research, at all three establishments of employment, subsequently extended over the wide field of Ca metabolism and its endocrine control. In 1969, he demonstrated the ability of vitamin D to stimulate Ca transport in vitamin-D-deficient chickens, and this initiated a period of

intense research into the endocrine control of vitamin D metabolism. In particular, he was able to demonstrate the reciprocal control of the hydroxylase enzymes in modulating the production of 1,25- and 24,25-dihydroxycholecalciferol and the importance of circulating oestrogens in this control process. But for his final research, only recently published in a PhD thesis by one of his many postgraduate students, he returned to a recurring theme, that of dietary phytate. In work which may have significant commercial value he showed that phytate phosphorus could be used exclusively to maintain normal growth and bone development of chickens provided that appropriate manipulations were made to dietary levels of vitamin D_3 and Ca. Such a dietary regimen would remove the need for expensive inorganic phosphate supplementation of the diet.

Such a brief synopsis can give only scant recognition to his rich and varied research career. Geoffrey Taylor's diffident and modest personality perhaps led to a considerable underestimation of his stature as a scientist, yet his outstanding calibre is evident from a review of the many papers he has published in the most demanding journals. His quick and perceptive mind was always obvious during departmental research talks when cherished hypotheses were questioned.

Besides his original scientific papers and reviews, Geoffrey also wrote a number of small books on nutrition. His most successful publication may well be a surprise to most members of the Society and reflected his many varied talents. This was a book on the genetic and dietary manipulation of coat colour in budgerigars which is still used apparently by breeders today. It developed from his boyhood hobby and led to his becoming a consultant to the Cage and Aviary Birds Association. Geoffrey's other great hobby was his garden, greenhouses and beehives in which his talent and empathy with life were so obvious. An expert on lilies, his garden even included a section for the cultivation of bog plants and was a wonderful reflection of his horticultural skills. He was always sympathetic to our failings in maintaining plants which he had generously donated to embellish our own environments.

Geoffrey also had a great love for teaching, which he did in his own inimitable style; informal, full of asides with the occasional unforgettable irrelevancies, but always interesting and informative. He also left a clear mark on the teaching programmes at both his universities. At Reading, he was responsible for modernizing the agricultural sciences courses by introducing the more modern dynamic concepts which were developing in post-war physiology and biochemistry. In his inaugural lecture for the Chair of Nutrition at Southampton, he emphasized his desire to implement the recommendations on nutrition education, made by the International Union of Nutritional Sciences, in the curriculum for preclinical and clinical training of medical students. While there is still some way to go on full implementation, the recognition that Southampton University has been at the forefront of these changes in medical education is a tribute to his endeavour and persuasiveness.

To those of us who were privileged to work with Geoffrey Taylor he will be remembered for far more than the achievements so superficially outlined here. He will be remembered for the man he was. As head of department he was not only concerned for the academic and professional development of his staff and students but he was also concerned for their welfare and that of their families. With his wife Francine, he hosted numerous marvellous parties each year—Christmas parties, summer barbecues, farewell and welcoming parties—to which staff, students, friends and neighbours were invited. Such hospitality was natural, for the department was really an extension of his family. Clearly to have seven children of your own is good training for future entertaining. This family atmosphere was never more apparent than in the annual children's Christmas party when Geoffrey always delighted in his role of Father Christmas. He has established

this position as one of the duties of the professor of nutrition at Southampton!

There can be few academics who earn both the deep respect and affection of their staff and colleagues. The affection developed from the friendship and interest he showed to everyone. The respect developed not only from his research activities but from the high professional standards and principles he set. He proved to be a very strong and determined chairman in overseeing the formative years of the developing School of Biochemical and Physiological Sciences at Southampton, his openness and honesty contributing greatly to his success in this position.

Geoffrey Taylor set standards of research achievement and professional standards that were a credit to him and a marvellous example for all of us to follow. It may come as no surprise that the family of Geoffrey Taylor have established a memorial fund in his name, the proceeds of which will be used to help support foreign students undergoing research training in nutrition at Southampton. Anyone wishing to contribute to the T. G. Taylor Memorial Fund may send their donations to the Department of Human Nutrition, Southampton University, Southampton SO9 3TU, UK.

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