ROBERT S. LOCKE—A CANADIAN DENTAL ANAESTHESIA PIONEER

The son of a general dentist, Robert (Bob) Locke was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. In 1953, Dr Locke graduated from the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Toronto. Instead of entering general practice with his father, he followed his passion of anaesthesia. The Faculty offered him a fellowship to study dental anaesthesia at the University of Pittsburgh under the legendary Dr Leonard Monheim. He jumped at this opportunity and was accepted by Monheim.

Upon graduation with his MS degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1956, Dr Locke returned to Toronto and established the first private dental anaesthesia practice in Canada. He also joined the Faculty of Dentistry, where his dental anaesthesia moniker met with tremendous opposition from the College of Medicine and, surprisingly, from several dental professionals. One can only imagine the difficulties that Dr Locke, the only dental anaesthetist in the country at the time, had to endure. His tenacity and work ethic prevailed. He showed both the Canadian medical and dental communities that general anaesthesia and sedation performed by uniquely trained dentists can be carried out efficiently and safely. The important role of dental anaesthesia in Canadian dentistry was forged thanks to his efforts.

In 1960, Dr Locke formally established the first (and still only) department of anaesthesia within a Canadian Faculty of Dentistry. His tiny department seemed dwarfed by others in the school as he was the department's only faculty member for many years. It was up to him to do all the teaching, all the while carrying on a very successful private practice. Dr Locke not only developed a comprehensive undergraduate curriculum, but also founded the postgraduate program in dental anaesthesia that is still in existence today.

Under Dr Locke, this postgraduate program began as a 12-month course. It has evolved considerably since its inception. It is currently a 3-year program and confers a graduate degree (MSc). Approximately half of the clinical teaching is done at the Faculty's outpatient anaesthesia suites with the remainder at affiliated adult and paediatric teaching hospitals, including the world-renowned Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. Extensive didactic and research components supplement the resident's experience. The curriculum is diverse, with emphasis on clinical care, didactic knowledge, research, and teaching. It is still the only postgraduate program in

Robert S. Locke

dental anaesthesia available in Canada. Approximately 40 dental anaesthetists have graduated from this program and practice throughout Canada, with most being located in the Province of Ontario. The department has grown to currently consist of 2 full-time professors and 9 part-time instructors. Members have garnered numerous research and teaching awards over the years and continue to publish extensively. The department remains on the firm foundation established by Dr Locke, yet continues to expand in influence within the Faculty of Dentistry as well as within Canada.

In 1990, Dr Locke retired from active teaching at the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Toronto. He had spent 34 years teaching anaesthesia and received many honours over the years. He retained the title of Professor Emeritus and was also named Alumnus of the Year by the Faculty. There is currently a scholarship in his name at the Faculty of Dentistry. Dr Locke was also a Fellow in the Royal College of Dentists of Canada, an organization that recognizes dentists with unique knowledge in their respective fields.

Dr Locke passed away on June 12, 2004, following a short illness. All dentists in Canada who practice sedation and general anaesthesia, as well as all patients who have benefited from this valuable service, owe him a debt of gratitude for his pioneering efforts as a dental anaesthesia educator and practitioner.

The Canadian Academy of Dental Anaesthesia was established in 1994 to act as a unified voice for dental

anaesthesia in Canada. It consists solely of dentists with significant advanced anaesthesia training and lobbies at national and provincial levels for dental anaesthesia issues. Its members are viewed in the Canadian dental community as “experts” in the field of dental anaesthe-

sia and, not surprisingly, most of its members are graduates of Dr Locke’s program.

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