

OBITUARY

Frank Clare Wilkinson

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Frank ('The Prof') Wilkinson died on 22 August 1979 a few days before his 90th birthday, after a long illness that followed a stroke which left him paralysed down the right side and virtually speechless.

Much has already been written about his academic achievements and it is sufficient to say he was Dean of two undergraduate dental schools, Dean of the Institute of Dental Surgery and Director of the Eastman Dental Hospital, and Vice-Dean and Dean of the Board of Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, of which he was a founder member. These achievements speak volumes.

Although Frank had a great knowledge of all aspects of dentistry and medicine, it was as an oral surgeon that most of us will remember him. There are many consultants today both in England and in many other parts of the world, especially Australia, who have passed through the Wilkinson oral surgery stable at the Eastman and Manchester. Those of us who were fortunate enough to work for him respected him and loved him; the knowledge he had gained in oral surgery from two world wars was immense. He was a tough boss and expected 100 per cent effort from his staff, whose loyalty he returned unflinchingly.



Of course the path of true love never runs smoothly, and to face him in his office if things had gone wrong was an experience indeed. It could be likened to coming face to face with a miniature volcano in violent eruption, but when the storm had passed there was always a drink ready and all was forgotten—but woe betide the individual who made the same mistake twice.

‘Prof’ was a founder member of the Oral Surgery Club and one of its past presidents. This small travelling club was one of his greatest pleasures. The British Association of Oral Surgeons was founded after his retirement and he was naturally made one of its first Honorary Fellows.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, and when the ‘Prof’ played he played just as hard as he worked. No mean golfer, a first class rugger player and a devoted yachtsman. Sailing was his great love, and his crew was always made up of his friends and staff. Those of us who sailed with him will look back on those days with pleasure.

In his heyday the world of dental politics was ruled by only a handful of great characters, of which he was by no means the least. Ruthless at times he may have been, but the empires he built have stood the test of time and many are grateful and indebted to him for his efforts.

When Frank reluctantly retired at the age of 70 he continued to take a great interest in dental affairs both in the United Kingdom and the antipodes, which he visited on several occasions; and until his stroke at the age of 84 he had been active and alert. He survived the last few years with typical courage and fortitude, aided by his longest and most loyal supporter of all—his wife Gladys.

It is to Gladys and his daughter Doreen that we extend our greatest sympathy.

DAVID DOWNTON