

Dr. Alan Stewart Curry (1925–2007)

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Dr. Alan Stewart Curry, the founder of The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT), a society he served first as its very active secretary and then in two consecutive 3-year terms as president, died on August 20, 2007, a few days after admission to a hospital near his home in Reading, Berkshire, England.

Alan Curry was born on October 11, 1925. He attended schools in Blackpool before starting Trinity College in Cambridge. His studies were interrupted by military duties; from 1945 to 1948 he served as a flight lieutenant in the Signal Corps of the Royal Air Force. Between 1948 and 1952 he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at Cambridge. Equipped with these qualifications, Dr. Curry entered the services of the Home Office as a forensic chemist. He worked first in the North Eastern Forensic Laboratory in Harrogate, then in the East Midlands Forensic Science Laboratory in Nottingham, which he directed between 1964 and 1966. During these years at Harrogate and Nottingham, Alan Curry was mainly involved with case work and became known as a very successful forensic investigator.

In 1966, Dr. Curry received the commission to found and direct a central forensic research establishment for the Home Office. In a decade, he built up, in Aldermaston, a research institution which has promoted forensic-chemical, toxicological, and forensic-biological methodology throughout the world. In his position as head of the Aldermaston forensic research establishment



he was also the coordinator of all research activities carried out in the different regional Home Office laboratories. In 1976, Dr. Curry was appointed Controller of the forensic sciences at the Home Office in London. This promotion involved abandoning the laboratory, abandoning his own research activities and research coordination, and becoming an administrator responsible for a forensic science staff of over 600 people and in charge of informing and advising the British government on all aspects of forensic sciences. In both positions, as head of Aldermaston and as Controller of all British forensic activities and government advisor, Curry's skill as an administrator with insight into the scientific as well as the practical side of the work was demanded.

Nothing better illustrates Alan Curry's administrative capabilities than the fast and efficient approach he took in the foundation of TIAFT. Toward the end of the 1963 meeting of the International Association of Forensic Sciences in London, he called a reunion of the forensic

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chemists who had attended. In a short talk, he explained to us the need to unite by forming a worldwide association, which would help and speed up the exchange of toxicological information, and would improve our professional know-how as well as the professional standing of forensic toxicologists. In not much more than an hour, he got us to decide on a short 1-page constitution for the new association, made us agree on its name, got us to elect Dr. E.G.C. Clarke as president, offered to serve for the first 3-year term as secretary, got some colleagues to accept the duties of treasurer and bulletin editors, and named the regional representatives. Alan managed to create TIAFT in a short ad hoc meeting. All founding members seemed very happy with the outcome and showed it by joining the newly elected officers in the next-door pub for a toast to the new society, an event which lasted considerably longer than the assembly itself. Thanks to Alan Curry, TIAFT was not only founded in one short meeting, but grew very fast to become in a few years the world's leading association of all chemists involved in forensic and related toxicological work.

Dr. Curry acquired a worldwide reputation as a forensic expert. This was not solely due to his position at the top of the British forensic science establishment, but also to his additional duties as chairman of the policy group on science and technology of the EC. In addition, he was often an invited speaker at international symposia. The wide range of his more than 100 publications proves that he was not only a chemist but an all-round forensic scientist, not only a researcher who conceived new techniques and procedures, but also an applied scientist who

solved practical cases. His book *Poison Detection in Human Organs* was a bestseller and present on the desk of most toxicologists. He was the author of several chapters in *Advances in Forensic Toxicology* by Stewart and Stolman and edited two volumes in the series of *Methods of Forensic Sciences*, as well as the two-volume book *Biochemistry of Women*. All these illustrate his scientific productivity and diversity.

Dr. Alan Curry was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Royal Society of Pathologists; he was honorary consultant in toxicology to the Royal Air Force, as well as a Fellow of the Belgian Pharmaceutical Society and the Indian Academy of Forensic Sciences.

Alan Curry's death is a great loss to the whole community of toxicologists, especially to analytical chemists involved in forensic sciences and forensic case work. He succeeded in uniting them beyond the borders of nations and continents and gave them tools to exchange information in order to improve their professional knowledge and skill as well as their professional standing. We learned from his books, his papers, and his many lectures.

A leader in the field of forensic sciences, who had—simultaneously—the qualities of a very successful forensic investigator, a devoted and highly respected forensic scientist, as well as an extremely capable administrator, has passed away. We shall miss him.

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