



L.D.Abbott, Jr.
1914-2004

L.D.Abbott, Jr., ex-educator, dies
BY ELLEN ROBERTSON¹

Medical College of Virginia biochemistry department Chairman Lynn DeForrest Abbott Jr. wasn't the kind of teacher who wanted his students to 'memorize this or memorize that.'

Wearing a short, white lab coat and holding a piece of chalk, "he would start his lecture on the hour and conclude at 10 to the hour, and when he finished, he would have told a story in biochemistry,"

said former colleague Dr. Richard Brandt of Richmond. "He won teaching awards regularly."

Dr. Abbott, described his wife as a "rather shy man who had a marvelous sense of humor and a great memory," died Tuesday in a local nursing home. He was 90.

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“It can be conservatively estimated that approximately 10,000 of Virginia’s and the nation’s physicians and surgeons, dentists, pharmacists and graduate and doctorate research scientists are indebted to Dr. Abbott for his influence on their professional careers,” said Dr. Edwin S. Higgins, acting department chairman after Dr. Abbott retired.

An Ithaca, N.Y., native, he earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Wayne State University. Dr. Abbott earned a doctorate at the University of Michigan in 1940 and came to MCV, which was recently renamed VCU Medical Center.

He left teaching in 1943 to serve as a Navy navigator in the Aleutian Islands during World War II.

In 1946, he returned to MCV as an assistant professor of biochemistry and later became a full professor. He served as department chairman from 1962 until he retired in 1976.

The biochemistry department grew from four faculty members to about a dozen under his leadership, former colleague Dr. William L. Banks Jr. said.

Dr. Abbott did important research on the relationship of vitamin B-12 and metabolism of blood molecules to pernicious anemia, sickle cell anemia, genetic blood diseases that present as metabolic problems and tracing the metabolism of purines, the “building blocks” of life, Higgins and Banks said.

His was the earliest use of stable nonradioactive isotopes as markers to study metabolism, and he was renowned for his studies using azo dyes to cause cancer in animals so scientists could study how cancer comes about, Higgins said.

From 1968 to 1973 he edited the Virginia Journal of Science.

Survivors include his wife of more than 63 years, Hester Easton Abbott; three sons, Lynn D. Abbott of New Orleans, and Dr. James E. Abbott and William L. Abbott, both of Richmond; a sister, Gladys Eichhorn of Homosassa, Fla.; and eight grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

A graveside service will be held Friday at 11 a.m. in Westhampton Memorial Park, 10000 Patterson Ave.