Alan Dobson

December 20, 1928 – February 21, 2017

Alan Dobson, Professor Emeritus of Biomedical Sciences in the College of Veterinary Medicine, died on 21st February, 2017. He was born on December 20th 1928 in Bethnal Green, London, England and educated at Westcliffe High School for boys in Essex. During the war he was evacuated with the rest of his school to Belper in Derbyshire. In 1947, after serving as a wireless fitter and instructor in the Royal Air Force, he was granted a scholarship to study Natural Sciences at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University. During this time he often cycled the 70 miles to his parent's home in Southend.

Completion of his Ph.D. in biochemistry at Aberdeen University in Scotland in 1956 led to employment in the nearby Rowett Research Institute as a senior scientific officer specializing in ruminant nutrition. There Alan met the love of his life, Marjorie, a Scottish microbiologist. They were happily married for 59 years until Marjorie's death in 2014.

In 1964 Alan joined the faculty of the College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University, in what was then known as the Department of Physiology. He was at the forefront in the use of computers for acquisition and analysis of physiological signals, and he enjoyed the rigor of programming in various digital languages. He studied how sheep and cattle absorb nutrients and, in the process, he became interested in regulation of blood flow. In turn, this led him to develop, validate, and refine new methods for measuring blood flow. Amongst those methods was an ultrasonic flow meter that he invented along with Cor Drost. In 1984, this resulted in the creation of, Transonic Systems, Inc., which is an international company based in Ithaca that uses ultrasound-based technology in scientific and medical devices. Alan thrived in his role as founding director of this company and served on its board of directors until a few years before his death.

Alan's academic career was characterized by careful experimental designs, enthusiasm for innovation, and abhorrence of wooly scientific thinking. He was a dogged advocate of academic freedom and the importance of the university in society. He had a seemingly endless supply of patience for students and junior colleagues, and he was a great model for aspiring scholars. In 1982 Alan was awarded the distinction of a Doctor of Science degree by his *alma mater*, Cambridge University, and in 1990 his research was recognized by his being made a Quatercentenary Research Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

Alan and Marjorie's home in Etna often hosted gatherings of friends and family. He particularly enjoyed bonfires in the meadow behind the house. His animated reading of the Wind in the Willows and Pooh Bear entranced many a visiting child. Alan played different recorders and enjoying making music with a group of friends; such events usually ended in tea or beer, homemade bread, cheese and chutney. Alan was a craftsman who designed and built early wind and string instruments, including a racket, cornettos, a clavichord and finally a bass viol with matching bows. He enjoyed looking at art; it was fun to do this with him and to observe his reaction to pieces and listen to his perspective. He read widely enjoying Jane Austin, Trollope, Boswell, detective novels and science.

He retired from Cornell in 1995, though he continued to work and published many papers as an emeritus professor. In 2008 both he and Marjorie went to a care home in Ithaca enabling him to faithfully care for her as her dementia progressed. He is survived by four children: Ian, Janet, Graham and Barry and nine grandchildren.

Written by Robin Gleed (Chair), Janet Clarke (nee Dobson),
Cor Drost, Wayne Schwark and John Wootton