

Obituary: Derek Horton (1933–2015)

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On June 5, 2015 my long-time mentor, colleague and friend, Professor Derek Horton, died at the age of 82 in his home in Chevy Chase, MD, USA. Derek had in the past few months been undergoing serious medical operations and challenging treatments. Nevertheless, Derek kept his sense of humor and inner peace until the very end.

Derek Horton was born in Birmingham, England and received his PhD and DSc from the University of Birmingham. His family later moved to the Isles of Scilly in Cornwall. Derek and his wife June, née Sculver, immigrated to the United States in 1959. Derek and June had been married for 56 years by the time of her death in 2013.

Derek's achievements in his professional life are astonishingly numerous and I will mention only the most prominent ones. He had a long tenure as Professor of Chemistry from

1959 to 1992 at The Ohio State University. Recently, a wing of the CBEC building is named 'The Horton Sugar Alley Laboratory Wing' to honor his scientific contributions. After retirement from OSU, he accepted in 1993 the Isbell Chair of Carbohydrate and Natural Product Chemistry at the American University in Washington D.C. and stayed at that post until 2009.

During his whole career Derek was a prolific scientific writer and editor. He co-founded and edited the leading journal *Carbohydrate Research* and was editor of the annual book series *Advances in Carbohydrate Chemistry and Biochemistry*. Derek published more than 500 articles and was awarded a large number of patents in the field of carbohydrate chemistry.

Derek was also extremely active in the international science community. He was a member of the IUPAC / IUBMB Joint Commission for Biochemical Nomenclature. In that quality he was one of the main authors of the Carbohydrate Nomenclature recommendations 2-Carb. He was a very active member of the Carbohydrate Division of the American Chemical Society. Derek was elected as Fellow in both the American Chemical Society and Royal Society of Chemistry. He also lectured and travelled widely and held visiting professorships at universities in France and Germany. Derek's achievements were highly regarded by his fellow scientists and he received prestigious awards throughout his career. Among these are the Haworth Medal from the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Patterson-Crane Award, the Wolfrom Award, and the Claude S. Hudson Award from the American Chemical Society.

Derek was a tremendous inspiration for me in my own career and it was a great privilege to have been one of his postdoctoral fellows and subsequently a Research Associate assisting him in managing the laboratory. Derek ascends to 'kingdom' in the famous 'Sugar Alley' at the Department of Chemistry at the Ohio State University. I was a member of 'Sugar Alley' for 5 years, and numerous students and

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postdoctoral fellows came from all over the world to study and do research. These ‘lost souls’ came from 28 countries and arrived in the USA for the first time to join in the work of ‘Sugar Alley’. Derek and his wife June provided great moral support to the ‘lost souls’ at crucial times in the beginning of their career. You could always count on Professor Horton to help when the going was tough. I still remember Derek waiting for me at the airport and taking me to his home for dinner after a long flight from Poland. Derek and June were great hosts in their lovely home and I have vivid memories of the Thanksgiving Dinners there that eventually became an annual tradition for our whole laboratory. It was in the home of Professor Horton and his wife June where all the foreign newcomers were introduced to this unique American tradition. In fact many of them attended the ‘*Sugar Alley Symposium Honoring Professor Derek Horton*’ on April 8–9, 2008 during 236th ACS National Meeting in New Orleans, one of

his favorite cities, and joined him and his family in the memorable Symposium Dinner.

Derek will be remembered as a great scientist who over so many years and in so many ways influenced the field of carbohydrate sciences. At the same time he will be remembered as a great father and husband. Lastly, he will also be remembered as an inspirational and gentle taskmaster who at the same time allowed his students and coworkers to explore new ideas.

He is survived by his four children, Martin (Karen) Horton, Veronica (Jack) Bashian, Fiona (Rick) Medich, and Simon Horton; grandchildren, Mika and Tori Horton, Nicholas, Elizabeth, Eleanor and Samuel Bashian, Elena and Alex Medich; step-grandchildren, Samantha (Jeff) Hamler and Rachel Whitmyer and step-great-granddaughter, Harper Hamler. He will be greatly missed by his students, colleagues, friends and most of all by his family.