

"Having been brought up in the English tradition, Dr. Burton insisted that there be a tea period each morning and afternoon, created a space for this activity where none had been available and make it virtually mandatory that every graduate student attend faithfully twice daily. As you can well imagine, with his booming voice and great hulk of a body, he completely commanded these seances, actively picked everybody's brain in turn, asked questions of an outlandish type, offered encouragement to anyone whose project was foundering and drew all of us closer to each other. I never experienced a more stimulating time before or since and I knew, without doubt, that I was in the presence of not only a magnificent brain but a truly great person."

Burton's enthusiasm was infectious and his skill as a lecturer was renowned among undergraduate and graduate students alike. As an examiner he was dreaded, because of the disconcertingly simple questions he asked (peering the while through those bushy eyebrows); yet his fairness could be relied upon utterly. He was never happier than in an undergraduate laboratory class, asking students questions about their experiments and the wider implications of their results. He used each experiment as a 'window' on to biology, and always ended up at the chalkboard expounding ideas and topics for research.

One of Burton's favorite quotations was Francis Bacon's description of 'The Scientific Mind':

"A mind, nimble and versatile enough to catch the resemblances of things, which is the chief point, and at the same time steady enough to fix and discern their subtle differences, endowed by nature, with the desire to seek, patience to doubt, fondness to meditate, slowness to assert, readiness to reconsider, carefulness to set in order, and neither affecting what is new nor admiring what is old and hating every kind of imposture."

Burton exemplified much of this himself, except that he never was slow to assert! However, he showed a willingness to reconsider, and always put his opponents on their mettle to produce convincing arguments in support of their contentions. He will be most remembered by students for his ability to make understandable to non-physicists the application of physical laws to biology. He believed, and exemplified in person, that the arousal of interest is paramount to success in teaching. He made the study of physics of living things relevant, exciting and, above all, fun.

Dr. Burton is survived by his wife Clara, son Peter, two grandchildren, and a large community of scientific children and friends. It was his family's wish that memorial contributions be made to:

The Dr. Alan C. Burton Prize Fund,
c/o The University of Western Ontario,
London, Ontario, Canada.

This prize of \$300 is awarded annually to the undergraduate student with the highest 'A' standing in Year III Biophysics courses, the courses Alan Burton loved most to teach. Each gift will be acknowledged and an official receipt issued by the University.

When I phoned a colleague of Dr. Burton's and broke the news to him, he said, reflectively, "That's really the end of an era, isn't it"? We have all shared this same awareness and have stopped in our tracks to reflect on Alan Burton - the man, his times and his achievements; not merely to admire or disapprove, but to learn what significant lessons we can learn from him as a man and as a

medical scientist. His portrait, drawn by his former graduate student Dr. Alfred Jay, hangs in our Seminar room and the Quotation from Bacon is inscribed on the wall of the foyer of our Medical School. Each of us at Western owes much to Alan Burton, and his spirit will live on in the Department of Biophysics he created.

Alan C. Groom, Ph.D.,
Professor and Chairman,
Department of Biophysics,
The University of Western Ontario.

1. Biophysics, Humble Pie for Inflated Physicists. Alan C. Burton. *Physics in Canada*. 8: 6-46 (1953).
 2. A Virtue of Ignorance. A Biophysicist asks simple questions about medicine and Medical Research. A. C. Burton. *Annals of the Royal Society of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada*. 1: 192-201 (1968).
 3. Variety - the spice of science as well as of life. The disadvantages of specialization. A. C. Burton. *Ann. Rev. of Physiol.* 37, 1975.
-

SPLANCHNIC CIRCULATION GROUP

The Splanchnic Circulation Group was established in the Spring of 1979 in order to increase communication and cooperation between investigators interested in circulation of the liver and digestive organs. Currently, the group has 70 members including physiologists, pharmacologists, and clinical investigators. The second annual meeting of this group will be held on May 18, 1980 at the University of Utah Medical Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, during the Digestive Diseases Week. Topic of the meeting is Methodology of Splanchnic Circulation. Those who are interested in the meeting and/or in joining the group should contact:

Dr. C. C. Chou
Department of Physiology
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824