

John Francis Lydiard “Jack” Woodbury

BSc, MDCM, FRCPC, FACP,

1918–2005

A pioneer in Canadian rheumatology, Dr. John (“Jack”) Francis Lydiard Woodbury, died in Camp Hill Veterans’ Memorial Building, at the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Friday, April 29, 2005. Although his family roots in Nova Scotia date from 1750, Dr. Woodbury was born December 22, 1918, in London, England, where his father was serving as Lieutenant Colonel in the First World War. He obtained his BSc and MDCM from Dalhousie University in 1943 and upon graduation he became a Captain in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. Following his army career, he spent 5 years in general practice in Halifax before pursuing post-graduate studies in internal medicine and rheumatology at the Toronto General Hospital and Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto. In 1950, he joined the Department of Medicine at Dalhousie University in Halifax and by 1969 he had become a full professor and was appointed as the first Director of the Dalhousie University Rheumatic Disease Unit. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in 1952.

Dr. Woodbury paved the way for the care of patients with rheumatic diseases in Nova Scotia and was largely responsible for establishing rheumatology as a recognized subspecialty of Internal Medicine in Eastern Canada. He was the first rheumatologist to practice in Nova Scotia and was renowned for the outstanding care and advocacy he provided to his patients. He was a long-standing member of the Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Council, working for the establishment of the Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Centre, where the Arthritis Centre of Nova Scotia is currently situated. Other major administrative positions included serving as President of the Canadian Arthritis and Rheumatism Society (currently the Canadian Rheumatology Association) from 1958 to 1959, President of the Medical Society of Nova Scotia, 1971–72, and founding President of the Society of Atlantic Rheumatologists. Dr. Woodbury was active as a Director of the Nova Scotia Division of The Arthritis Society for many years and served nationally on The Society’s medical and scientific committees. In 1994, he was appointed Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Medicine, Dalhousie University.

Dr. Woodbury’s scholarly contributions included publications on the clinical manifestations and treatment of gout, cardiovascular manifestations of rheumatoid arthritis, and

lung disease in patients with ankylosing spondylitis. He also supervised the clinical training of numerous rheumatology trainees, most of whom are in practice in North America but also in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. At the time of his retirement in 1989, in recognition of his contributions to teaching, research, and clinical care, he was honored by his many colleagues, patients, and friends by the establishment of the JFL Woodbury Lectureship in Rheumatology. This endowed lectureship continues to bring outstanding individuals in the field of rheumatology to Dalhousie University on an annual basis.

In addition to a busy professional career, Jack had many interests and hobbies that he shared with his wife, Mary, and their family. Jack loved to play tennis and did so with vigor and considerable success in spite of his lifelong ankylosing spondylitis. He also enjoyed gardening, bridge, theatre, and music, and was an accomplished photographer. For several years Jack was President of the Board of Directors of Milford House Properties Limited, a holiday resort in Nova Scotia, where he and his family spent many happy vacations, the memories of which are cherished. He was an avid reader and had an extraordinary fund of information. His welcoming smile and his remarkable sense of humor were two of his many trademarks.

Jack Woodbury was an inspiration to those who worked with him and was a shining example of someone for whom the practice of medicine was both a vocation and a career. This was evident in the exemplary care he provided to his patients and the leadership he demonstrated in establishing rheumatology in Eastern Canada. He left an indelible imprint on the local and national medical scene and challenged those who followed to build upon his achievements. He will be missed, but certainly not forgotten.

JOHN G. HANLY, MD,

Head, Division of Rheumatology,
Director, Arthritis Centre of Nova Scotia,
Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre and Dalhousie University,
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 4K4, Canada
E-mail: john.hanly@cdha.nshealth.ca

Address reprint requests to Dr. Hanly.

