

OBITUARY

GERALD P. WALSH, Ph.D.

1935–2001



Gerald (Gerry) P. Walsh, was born in Trenton, New Jersey, and died in Frederick, Maryland on 12 May 2001. He was 65. For three years he had struggled valiantly with a

brain tumor (gliomatosis cerebri).

He was buried in the cemetery at Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, Maryland, where he took his college training and graduated *magna cum laude* in 1957 with a degree in biology. In 1960 he received his master's degree in bacteriology and in 1962 his Doctor of Philosophy in experimental medicine from the St. Thomas Institute of Advanced Studies, in Cincinnati, Ohio. He and his wife Geraldine Lee Van De Ryt were married in 1960.

After completion of his graduate studies, he was the Diagnostic Bacteriologist at the New Jersey Department of Health in Trenton, 1962–1966. Then, with his wife and children, Gerry went to the Philippines where he served as Assistant Laboratory Director at the Leonard Wood Memorial (LWM) Research Laboratory in Cebu, 1967–1968. Returning to the States, he worked as Assistant Microbiologist and Research Associate in Professor Dr. John Hanks' Department of Pathobiology, at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in Baltimore.

In 1970, Dr. Walsh became the Laboratory Director at the LWM Leprosy Research Laboratory in Cebu, where he and his family lived until 1972.

Dr. Walsh joined the Gulf South Research Institute (GSRI) in New Iberia, Louisiana, in 1972, as Associate Scientific

Director, and Director of the Microbiology Department. Here he began many years of experimental leprosy work on the nine-banded armadillo and was a principal figure in the development of this mammal as a model for the study of leprosy. During this time he collaborated closely with Dr. E. E. Storrs and others at GSRI, and with Dr. Chapman H. Binford and colleagues at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) in Washington.

While I had known Dr. Walsh since 1968, it was in 1975 that we began a lifelong friendship, sharing gains and losses alike in our efforts in experimental leprosy. While some of our mutual studies stirred controversy, Gerry persevered and made many significant contributions in many facets of leprosy research. Over time, the armadillo became recognized as a useful laboratory animal for studying leprosy and other mycobacterial diseases, and Dr. Walsh one of the world's experts in its husbandry.

One of his notable contributions to the field of leprosy research in 1974 was his primary role in the detection of *M. leprae* infection in the wild armadillos that inhabit many parts of the southern United States, including especially Louisiana and Texas. The postulation that leprosy could be a naturally-acquired infection among wild armadillos was contested by many leprosy researchers. This was widely confirmed eventually and is now an important chapter in the annals of leprosy research. Later, Walsh was a lead investigator in developing a nonhuman primate model for studying tuberculosis.

In 1978, Dr. Walsh and his family, along with his colony of armadillos, moved to the Washington DC area. Gerry became Chief of Experimental Mycobacteriology at the AFIP, under the auspices of the American Registry of Pathology. With his team of local field workers in Louisiana capturing wild armadillos, adapting them to captivity, then shipping them to Dr. Walsh's labora-

tory, he and his colleagues for many years supplied experimentally infected armadillo tissue to the World Health Organization's Immunology of Leprosy Tissue Bank in England. Leprosy bacilli derived from these tissues were employed by a multitude of scientists around the world in their investigations.

As a Research Affiliate with Tulane University, from 1979 on, Dr. Walsh's efforts in experimental leprosy included observations on nonhuman primates, especially with sooty mangabey monkeys in collaboration with Dr. Bobby J. Gormus at the Tulane Regional Primate Center, Covington, Louisiana.

Again in 1987, Dr. Walsh returned to Cebu, now as Director, Philippine Operations, for the LWM Leprosy Research Center. His work there included research and teaching, as leprosy workers in many countries of Asia came to Cebu for seminars and training in the clinical and experimental aspects of the field of leprosy. The laboratories there were developed into a productive world-class level of expertise.

In addition to his professional association with the World Health Organization, Dr. Walsh served as advisor to the Pan American Health Organization, and as a member of the Study Section of the Cooperative Development Research Program through the Agency for International Development.

Dr. Walsh authored or co-authored more than 150 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals or chapters in books, primarily in the areas of clinical and experimental leprosy and tuberculosis. His research also included other diseases, including cat scratch fever, Buruli ulcer, and assessing new types of therapy for psoriasis.

He served on the board of the Damien-Dutton Society for Leprosy Aid for many years, and was a member of the American Society for Microbiology, the American Association for the Advancement of Science,

the International Leprosy Association, the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, and the American Association of Laboratory Animal Science.

Wherever his scientific endeavors led him, Gerry was always involved in community efforts. He served on the board of directors for St. Johns at Prospect Hall High School in Frederick, Maryland, and was a member of the Rotary Club in New Iberia, Louisiana and in Cebu, Philippines. He was an active and involved member of St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church, in Frederick, Maryland.

A high point in Gerry's and my collaboration and friendship was our invited participation in a one-week symposium on leprosy at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, The Vatican, in 1984. This symposium was capped by a private audience of the participants with His Holiness, John Paul II. Gerry's usual camaraderie was in full form as he exchanged quips with the Pope—although I believe Gerrie Lee was for a moment chagrined over the informal nature of the exchange. Nevertheless, John Paul II's autograph in a book of the Pope's poetry was obtained and became a cherished object in the Walsh home.

Dr. Walsh was much loved by his colleagues and coworkers, administrative associates, animal handlers, laboratory technicians and co-investigators alike. He led the Philippine team through many periods of adversity, and his Filipino associates will greatly miss Gerry.

Dr. Walsh was warmly proud of his family and their accomplishments. He is survived by his wife Gerrie Lee, four children and four grandchildren. He will be greatly missed by all of us, but we take pleasure in knowing that through his efforts the fight against leprosy has been substantially advanced.

—Wayne M. Meyers, M.D., Ph.D.