

Obituary

Dr. Robert C. Hastings (1938–2014)



Dr. Robert C. Hastings, physician, pharmacologist and internationally distinguished leprologist, passed away on 15th December, 2014, at the age of 76, after a long illness. Affectionately known to colleagues around the world as ‘Bob’, he sometimes described himself as ‘a country boy from the mountains of Tennessee’, where he was born. He earned his medical degree *summa cum laude* at the University of Tennessee, and a PhD in Pharmacology from Tulane University. He was a Commissioned Officer in the United States Public Health Service, and spent his entire career at the USPHS Hospital at Carville, Louisiana. In addition to his

clinical duties there, he was a leading investigator in studies of the pharmacology of several important drugs used in leprosy. Over a remarkable 40-year career, from 1968 to 1998, he was an author or co-author on nearly 80 peer-reviewed publications dealing with antimycobacterial and anti-inflammatory drugs in this disease. This included seminal work on the treatment of leprosy reactions with thalidomide. He retired as Chief of the Laboratory Research Branch of the US National Hansen’s Disease Programs in 1994.

Bob Hastings is undoubtedly best known internationally for his remarkable career as an editor. He was the Editor of *The International Journal of Leprosy* from 1979–2002, encouraging and promoting the publication of many reports from young investigators and spending countless hours assisting them in revising manuscripts for publication. He was also the Editor of ‘Leprosy’, the textbook published in 1985 with contributions from the major leprologists of the time. This has been the standard text on this disease for more than 25 years, and is on the shelf of nearly everyone working on this disease today. He dedicated this text to his granddaughter, born in 1983, ‘. . . in the hopes that her children, and her children’s generation all over the world, [would] be free from leprosy.’ Bob was a skilled and empathetic physician, an outstanding intellect, and a critical thinker. He was self-effacing and genial in his interactions with colleagues ranging from prominent scientists to those just beginning their careers. In his farewell as the Editor of the Journal he wished, to those continuing in the field, ‘. . . every success in making further contributions to some of God’s most needy people, leprosy patients.’ He will be greatly missed and long remembered for his contributions to the fight against leprosy.

David Scollard