

Ronald P Winstanley (1924-2020)

The following obituary of Dr Ronald P Winstanley (known to friends and family as Ron) appeared in the January 2021 edition of the British Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

23/02/2021

Ron was born in Bolton, Lancashire on the 13th March 1924, the second of six children. He was educated at Thornleigh Salesian College until, tragically, he lost his father at the age of fourteen to sepsis from a simple

cut to his finger in 1938, this being several years before the widespread use of antibiotics in 1942. Together with his elder brother he had to leave school at the age of fourteen to help support his widowed mother and siblings.

During the war years (1939-45), Ron worked in a reserved occupation at an engineering company, which exempted him from being called up for military service. He completed his schooling on a part-time basis by attending night school, finally obtaining his Higher School Certificate at the age of 21 in 1945. At the same time, he also studied for a Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Electrical Engineering at Bolton Technical College, and completed the course a year later in 1946.

After completing his school studies and HNC, Ron obtained a place to study Electrical Engineering at

Manchester University in 1946. However, on arriving at the Engineering Department, he was told that his name was not on the list of new students. This was, understandably, a bitter disappointment to Ron. Nevertheless, he was determined to attend University, and enquired if there were places available on any other courses. Ron was informed that places were still available at the Dental School and thought it sounded interesting, and as he had set his heart on being at University embarked on a career in dentistry at the age of 22. Two months later, he was informed that there had been an administrative error, and that there was, in fact, a place available for him to study Electrical Engineering should he wish to take it. His dogged and determined reply was that he had started dentistry, and was going to finish the course.

Ron qualified with the Licentiate in Dental Surgery in July 1951. Ron was immediately drawn to Oral Surgery obtaining his Dental Fellowship in 1955. Still unusual in those early days of Oral Surgery he decided that being doubly qualified in Medicine was a necessity, and so commenced his medical studies at the Royal Free Medical School. It was at this stage that he came in contact with Opus Dei, living as a resident at Netherhall House. It was after Ron had met St Josemaria Escriva in 1958 when he was visiting London, that Ron became a numerary member of Opus Dei. It was through his encounter with Opus Dei that throughout his life Ron realised that his work was a Vocation, and that through his hard work and his strong Catholic faith he would serve his patients.

He continued with his medical studies, financing them and helping his family back in Bolton by working

part-time as a dentist in London, amazingly parking his car outside his surgery on Marylebourne Road.

Ron qualified in Medicine in 1959 at the age of 35, and gained his surgical fellowship from the Royal College of Surgeons that same year. Ron's determined approach to study over two decades is all the more impressive given that he was dyslexic, and it was his excellent memory and intelligence that got him through all the exams.

On qualifying Ron moved back to Manchester remaining in the area for the rest of his life. In 1962 Ron oversaw the acquisition and setting up of a new student Hall of Residence for Manchester University at Greygarth Hall. Ron was the first director of the residence, and also served in the official role of Warden until 1998.

At the same time as being the Warden of Greygarth Hall, Ron was appointed Consultant in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon at Hope Hospital in Salford. Ron still found time to write several published papers. Most notably was his early work on an intra oral approach to osteotomies entitled “Subcondylar Osteotomy of the Mandible and the Intraoral Approach” BJOS 1968 Vol 6 Iss 2

Ron was involved from the early days of Orthognathic Surgery and one of his early cases was featured in a Daily Express article after correcting their skeletal discrepancy. He also once had the daunting task of surgically extracting a decayed tooth from a circus bear at the old Belle Vue Zoo!

Ron's enthusiasm for his work also inspired many people to choose a career in Dentistry namely, Tony his

brother, and three nephews, Paul, Timothy, and Robert Winstanley.

Ron retired from Hope Hospital in 1989 and carried on with locum work until the maximum permitted age, at the time, of 70, when he retired completely. Even in his retirement he had a letter published in the *British Medical Journal*. In that letter he replies to an article entitled “Why are doctors so unhappy” by advocating following St Josemaria’s advice from the *Furrow*:

“You are unhappy because you make everything revolve around yourself, as if you were always the centre: you have a stomach-ache, or you are tired, or they have said this or that...

—Have you ever tried thinking about Jesus, and through Him, about others?”

Ron slowly declined during his final years, being cared for by his brothers

in Opus Dei at their new residence Brookfield adjoining Greystead Hall, but always remaining cheerful, prayerful, and happy. He would spend large parts of the day praying the rosary. Despite his personal difficulties, he would always think of others. The current students from Greystead Hall would spend several hours a day keeping him company, and helping him to take his meals. Ron brought many people to Dentistry, Medicine, and Opus Dei, attracted by his quiet, unassuming, and humble manner. Ron passed away at home on 4th July 2020.

Original article in the British Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
