E. Geoffrey Walsh
1922 - 2003

Geoffrey Walsh was born in Cheltenham on 25 November, 1922. After education at Cheltenham Grammar School (1932-1940) he won a Scholarship to Exeter College, Oxford University to study medicine. He graduated BA with 1st class Honours in Animal Physiology in 1943, winning several undergraduate prizes.

Geoff began his research career in neurophysiology in 1944, still at Oxford, and published a Physiological Society communication with David Whitteridge that year. He then spent two years as a Rockefeller student at Harvard University, gaining an MD. Returning to Oxford, he graduated MA, BSc and BM BCh in 1947, and pursuing further clinical training gained the DTM & H at Liverpool University in 1948, worked for a while as a ship’s surgeon, and qualified MRCP (London) in 1950. The next year he joined David Whitteridge, who had moved to the Chair of Physiology in the University of Edinburgh, as a Lecturer in the Department of Physiology.

His research was focused on the challenges of investigating neuromuscular control in humans, with a particular interest in the effects of vestibular dysfunction, and thus in the neurophysiological basis of balance, and of tremor. His research aims were generally directed towards understanding clinical neurological disorders, and to this end he was a part-time electroencephalographer in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (1951-54), then an Honorary Consultant for the South East Scotland Regional Hospital Board (1957-63), later studying paraplegic patients, and in his last years he was Honorary Neurophysiological Specialist at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh. This last appointment recognised his long interest in the motor control problems of spastic children, and led to studies on the shaken baby syndrome.

Meanwhile, his original research and scholastic contributions, ably described in Martin Lakie’s tribute, and including his book *The physiology of the nervous system* (published first in 1957, and in a 2nd edition in 1964; translated into several languages) led to promotion to Senior Lecturer and finally Reader in 1967. His original contributions to human neurophysiology were recognised by Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, in 1959, and his continuing interest in clinical problems by the award of Fellowships of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of both London (1967) and Edinburgh (1968). For example, in 1963-64, while a WHO visiting Professor at the Baroda Medical College in India, he advised the Tuberculosis Chemotherapy Centre in Madras on testing to identify vestibular damage from anti-tubercular drugs.

All the while Geoff was an active and loyal member of the Physiological Society, very frequently giving oral communications, and especially demonstrations at meetings of the Society. He was a member of the Editorial Board of *The Journal of Physiology* (1965-1972), a member of the Society’s Committee (1983-86), and played a key role in the organisation of Society meetings in Edinburgh.

Geoff was bemused and dismayed by the academic leadership problems that beset the Edinburgh Medical School’s Department of Physiology in the 1980s, and were still unresolved at his retirement in 1990, but, keeping close links, he enjoyed seeing the Department subsequently recover and flourish in the next few years. Geoff’s valued contributions to teaching undergraduates, and the fact that he was continually research active for nearly 60 years, as evidenced by his publications, led the University of Edinburgh Medical School exceptionally to repeatedly renew his post-retirement Honorary Fellowship, which he still held on his death on 26 March, 2003 at the age of 80 years.

Geoff was particularly pleased to be awarded an extra-mural Professorship by the University of Central England in 1998, and the title of his inaugural lecture makes plain the multiple facets of his interests in human neurophysiology, including his late-developing interest in the fine control of finger movements in musicians, alongside his own learning of how to play the flute and the saxophone: ‘Movement control in normals, the disabled and musicians: muscles, medicine and Mozart’.

Geoff’s wife, Penny, a charming, strong and supportive companion, died in 2000, and they are survived by three of their four daughters, and grand-children.

**John A Russell**
University of Edinburgh

**Martin Lakie adds:**
I first met Geoff Walsh 30 years ago. I was then a callow undergraduate student of physiology at Edinburgh. At this time I first entered the rather gloomy basement which housed the Human Neurophysiology Lab, and the intriguingly named Special Senses Lab, which were presided over by Dr E.G. Walsh and his technician Mr G. Wright (no first name status in those days). The labs and his office were very often home to Geoff’s Dalmatian dog, Tasha. Experimental classes for students were overseen by the two gentlemen. For these