
OBITUARY:
Douglas W. Ribbons (1936-2002)

Douglas W. Ribbons, Professor Emeritus and former Leverhulme Professor of Biotechnology at the Imperial College of Science, Technology, and Medicine at the University of London, and former chairman of the Department of Biochemistry and Soil Science at the University College of North Wales in Bangor, died October 7, 2002 in Miami after a brief illness. He was 66 years of age.

Ribbons was internationally recognized as an authority on biochemistry, biotechnology, and microbiology. His main research expertise was on microbial degradation of aromatic compounds and on the accompanied formation of chiral metabolites. Furthermore, he was engaged on bacterial metabolism of single carbon compounds, specially methane oxidation. In the course of his last years Doug delved into *in situ* monitoring of microbial biotransformations by NMR spectroscopy.

During his career, Ribbons wrote approximately 140 scientific articles and reviews. He gave numerous invited presentations in research institutes, on national and international scientific meetings, and in industrial companies. Doug served as an editor for fourteen books; eleven of them are volumes of the microbiology 'bible', »Methods in microbiology«. Furthermore, he was on the editorial boards of some leading professional journals. Ribbons trained dozens of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows, who later populated the academic community with senior professors and chairs of departments.

Ribbons was born on August 28, 1936, in London, England. After attending the basic school he studied Agricultural Biochemistry and Soil Science at the University College of North Wales. He received his bachelor's degree with First Class Honors in 1957, and earned his Ph.D. degree in Microbial Biochemistry there three years later. The University of Wales awarded him the D.Sc. degree in Microbial Metabolism in 1972.

Doug Ribbons devoted his life to biochemistry and jointed several institutes and laboratories on three continents: from 1960 to 1963 he was an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Biochemistry of the University of Glasgow and from 1963 to 1964 he was a Lecturer in the Department of Biochemistry of the University of Hull. Then he went for four years as Senior Scientist to the Milstead Laboratory of Chemical Enzymology of the Shell Research Ltd. in Sittingbourne and London. In 1968 Doug moved as Associate Professor to the University of Miami. There he got a full Professorship of Biochemistry and Microbiology in 1971 and served as vice-chairman of the Biochemistry Department until 1981, intermitted by a sabbatical year at the Australian National University in Canberra from 1976 to 1977. Ribbons served from 1980 to 1984 as chairman of the Department of Biochemistry and Soil Science at the University College of North Wales in Bangor and from 1984 to 1989 as Leverhulme Professor of Biotechnology at the Imperial College of Science, Technology, and Medicine at the University of London. As Professor Emeritus of the Imperial College of Science, Technology, and Medicine at the University of London he still kept active and got a Professorial Research Fellow of the Departments of Chemistry and Biological Science at the University of Exeter from 1992 to 1994. In 1994 Doug

went as Research Professor to the Organic Chemistry Department at the University of Technology in Graz where he stayed until 2000. From 2000 to 2002 he spent his life as pensioner in Miami, still active in writing scientific publications.

Doug Ribbons was a man with scientific enthusiasm and many human accomplishments. He had a unique ability to stimulate especially young colleagues from different chemical and biochemical research fields to collaborate and to motivate them with creativity and insights. Doug's colleagues were inspired by his ability to concentrate on the essential problems and his students were exhilarated by his skill to present difficult cohesions in comprehensible words.

Doug Ribbons will be sorely missed by his family, friends, colleagues, former students and all those of us who had the good fortune to know him. He gave much of himself to others.

Doug Ribbons will always be remembered as a friend, a colleague, and a man who dedicated his life to science.

Lothar Brecker, Grit Straganz
and Walter Steiner
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