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***In Memoriam* Harold W.  
Rossmore (1925-2003):  
a personal view**

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The 13th International Biodeterioration and Biodegradation Symposium (IBBS) will be the first to be held without Prof. Harold W. Rossmore. Beginning with the first symposium, in Southampton, UK in 1968, his presence has been felt at every single meeting. He even participated in a meeting, held in London, UK in 1965, that is considered to be the starting point for the International Biodeterioration & Biodegradation Society. Although, due to his poor health, he was unable to attend the 12th IBBS, held in Prague in 2002, he contributed a lecture, which one of his collaborators, Mohammed Sondossi, read on his behalf. Not only did Prof. Rossmore participate in all IBBS, but he also organized two of them: the 8th Symposium (Windsor, Ontario, Canada, 1990), and the 11th Symposium (Arlington, Virginia, USA, 1999), both of which were extremely successful.

Professor Harold W. Rossmore died on July 28, 2003. His death has been a great loss to many people, including myself, and a huge loss for the IBBS, due to his long and meritorious service to the Society and its journal. It will be difficult, if not impossible to find someone who can match Prof. Rossmore in his devotion and dedication to the IBBS.

I first met Harold in 1991, when he delivered the opening lecture at the 1st Symposium on Biodeterioration in Spain. The symposium was organized by the Biodeterioration Group of the Spanish Society for Microbiology (SEM), which I led, and took place in Madrid. Our friendship grew over the years, as did my deep admiration for him. The obituary writ-

ten by Prof. Brian Flannigan, for the *International Biodeterioration and Biodegradation Journal* (IBBJ) (2004, 54:81-85), ended with the following quote: "We can pay no finer or more apposite tribute than by echoing the elegant words of Rabbi Loss of Temple Israel [West Bloomfield, Michigan, USA; where Harold taught religious school students for a number of years in the 1950s and 1960s], who said of him 'He was a scientist, but of even greater significance he was a *mentsh*', a person who combined kindness, responsibility, and dignity." I could not agree more with those words.

Harold's charismatic personality attracted many different kinds of people. He was very special to me with respect to our professional lives since we had many things in common. We both finished high school very young, we both had a degree in Pharmaceutical Science, and we were both Registered Pharmacists. Later on, both of us obtained a PhD in Microbiology and received Fulbright scholarships; he, as an American, spent one year working in Spain, and I, as a Spaniard, spent one year working in the US. We both eventually became professors of Microbiology. Later, he became the first non-British president of the International Biodeterioration Society, and, a few years later, I became the first person from a non-English-speaking country to become president of the same Society.

Harold and his family lived in Madrid in 1965, during which time he became enamored with Spain. Whenever he had the professional opportunity to come back to Spain, he

always managed to take time off to travel around the country. In his delightful book, *Microbes, Our Unseen Friends*, which won him the 1978 New York Academy of Science Award, he wrote: "There is no more delightful pastime than slowly drinking a cool *copita of Montilla* in an outdoor cafe on a palm-shaded sidewalk in Córdoba!" (page 187).

This book, published by Wayne State University Press, Detroit, Michigan, 1976, is, unfortunately, out of print. Yet Harold had the kindness of photocopying it and sending it to me, with a personal dedication in Spanish: "A Profesor Fernando Laborda. 8/12/97. Querido Fernando- Un recuerdo de nuestra Amistad. Con Abrazos. Harold". ("To Professor Fernando Laborda. 8/12/97. Dear Fernando- This is a reminder of our Friendship. My deepest affection, Harold). As a result of the time he spent in Spain, Harold was able to speak Spanish reasonably well, and he liked to speak it whenever possible.

In many ways, Harold was very helpful to our Spanish Biodeterioration Group. He became a member of the Sociedad Española de Microbiología (SEM), and he kindly agreed to be a member of the editorial board of *International Microbiology*. Harold was very experienced in the field of scientific editing; for many years, he was Editor-in-Chief of the *International Biodeterioration and Biodegradation Journal*. He was also on the editorial boards of many other journals, including *Lubrication Engineering*, *Journal of Invertebrate Pathology*, *Developments in Industrial Microbiology*, and the *Journal of Industrial Microbiology*. In addition, for one term he was the president of the Society for Industrial Microbiology.

As a result of his dedication to the SEM, he was appointed one of its few honorary members. I had the privilege to present this award to him during the 16th SEM Meeting, held in Barcelona, Spain, in 1997.

After our initial meeting, in 1991, I saw Harold on many occasions at scientific conferences around the world. Harold was an excellent speaker, and I was privileged to have the opportunity to learn so much from him. We also kept in touch between conferences, mostly by phone. I would usually call to ask him for his advice, but we would end up discussing many different subjects. Following his retirement from Wayne State University, he founded Biosan Laboratory Inc., in 1973, in order to meet "the need for an independent microbiology laboratory where clients could count on reliable, unbiased, and accurate results". This company, which was started in Harold's basement, is now very successful, and is located in a 10,000-square-foot building and run by his son, Leonard.

I will not try to describe Prof. Harold W. Rossmore's curriculum vitae, which was indeed very extensive. Nor will I list his scientific achievements or nor his numerous awards. My intention is to pay tribute to Harold as a person. I am sure that he will be missed by many people, especially by his wife, Kati, to whom I offer my sincere condolences. Those of us who were privileged to know him will remember his kindness, his sense of humor, and his charismatic personality. The 13th IBBS is a most suitable setting for paying homage to the man that, with his seemingly boundless energy and effort, contributed to the success of all the IBB Symposia.