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PERSPECTIVE

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In memoriam: John Terrence Headington (1930-2021)

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John T. Headington, MD (Figure 1) passed away on March 30, 2021. Terry was a brilliant, creative, and insightful dermatopathologist who made many seminal observations and contributions during his more than 30-year career. Terry was a Michigan man, having completed his undergraduate degree, medical degree, and residency training in anatomic and clinical pathology and dermatology at the University of Michigan. During the 1960s and 1970s, he had many colorful experiences that enriched his life and helped make him the quintessential scholar that we remember so fondly. For 2 years, he served as Captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps and was Chief of Clinical Pathology at Letterman General Hospital. He also spent 2 years as Visiting Professor of Pathology in northern Thailand with the U.S. Agency for International Development/University of Illinois Chiang Mai Project. Before, during, and after his travels, Terry always returned to the University of Michigan, where he quickly rose through the ranks of academic medicine being promoted to Professor in 1971. He also pursued residency training in dermatology at the University of Michigan, which included a year of training at the prestigious St. John's Institute of Dermatology, King's College London, England.

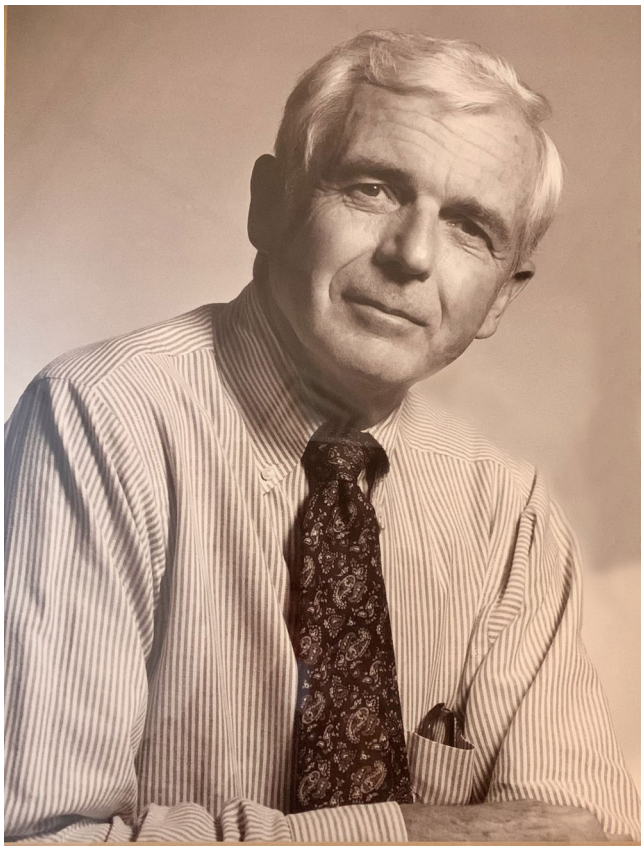

FIGURE 1 John Terrence Headington (1930-2021)

Terry's years of practicing both anatomic and clinical pathology were the foundation for his later dermatopathology expertise. Before concentrating on skin disease, Terry attained expertise in muscle biopsies. He was the hospital microbiology lab director for years. According to his close friend and colleague, the late John Batsakis of head and neck pathology fame, he even predicted that computers were the future of medicine—in the late 1960s!

This unique background provided the scaffolding for a brilliant and productive academic career in dermatopathology. Terry published more than 100 papers in peer-reviewed journals, delivered numerous invited lectures nationally and internationally, and helped train hundreds of pathology and dermatology residents. Terry's contribution to the field of follicular neoplasms, their identification, and classification remains seminal work.[1-3] In 1984, he introduced us to the "Headington technique" of transverse (horizontal) sections for scalp biopsies for alopecia, which is currently used worldwide.[4] He was the first to identify the dermal dendrocyte as a resident cell in the dermis and recognize it as an

important member of the skin immune system.[5-7] Terry cofounded the University of Michigan multidisciplinary melanoma clinic in 1982, enhanced our understanding of the pathology of melanoma,[8] and was instrumental in the development of the "square" technique for staged excision of lentigo maligna and lentigo maligna melanoma.[9] He and colleagues were the first to describe cutaneous lymphadenoma[10] and sclerosing sweat duct (syringomatous) carcinoma.[11] He used his influence and voice to support his clinical colleagues publicly when the landscape of Mohs micrographic surgery had yet to be defined.[12]

Terry was a skilled teacher who lectured audiences ranging from medical students to international experts. Terry crafted his lectures to perfection. In the pre-digital era, he insisted that professional medical illustrators prepare his 35 mm Kodachromes to the detriment of the departmental budget. Frequently voted the best laboratory instructor of the sophomore general pathology course, he is remembered by generations of Michigan medical students in fields far removed from dermatology and pathology. One of his favorite didactic techniques was to tear up articles from *The New England Journal of Medicine* to reinforce the need for constant critical thinking. "The worst thing you can do is make a diagnosis" was his mantra to emphasize the need to continually reassess a patient's care.

Terry was active in the American Society of Dermatopathology (ASD). He served as Secretary-Treasurer from 1978 to 1981 and President in 1983. He was the recipient of the prestigious Founder's Award in 1992 for his dedication and service to the ASD and his many outstanding and significant contributions to the field. His other awards include an honorary doctorate from the University of Bordeaux, France, honorary member of the British Association of Dermatology and Dermatology Society of South Africa, and a Fellow of the Royal College of Medicine.

Terry had tremendous charm, wit, and forever a twinkle in his eye as he let those around him know of his exceptionally high standards. While Terry was a dermatopathologist extraordinaire, he was also a world traveler, athlete, hiker, avid skier, oenophile (a Gougerot society founding member!), and bibliophile. He challenged residents to beat him in his daily noontime runs through Nichols Arboretum and, to our knowledge, he never lost. He lived life to the fullest with Jill, his lovely wife of 63 years who died 2 weeks before Terry.

Our field of dermatopathology and our careers have been shaped and influenced by Terry Headington, either directly or indirectly. Terry was truly one of a kind. All of us who were fortunate enough to know him are the lucky ones. He will be missed.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing not applicable - no new data generated, or the article describes entirely theoretical research

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