

John Anthony Coxon (July 15, 1943 - April 14, 2022)



John Coxon, Professor *Emeritus* in the Department of Chemistry at Dalhousie University, passed peacefully after a brief and unexpected illness, on April 14, 2022.

John was born in Blackpool, England in 1943. His Chemistry teacher, Mr. Peter Manson (Arnold Grammar School, Blackpool) sparked his life-long passion for Chemistry and they still remained in touch. As a young man, John also enjoyed playing cricket, golf and squash.

John received his BA (1964) and MA (1966) from Cambridge University and his MSc (1965) and PhD (1967) from the University of East Anglia under the supervision of his beloved mentor, Dr. Michael Clyne. He held a Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 Research Fellowship, 1967-1969, University of London, Queen Mary College, with Dr. Clyne who had moved there from East Anglia, and remained at Queen Mary College as an ICI Postdoctoral Fellow, 1969-1971 and SRC Postdoctoral Fellow, 1971-1973. It is there that he met his wife, Nithyani Kandiah from Kuala Lumpur, who was pursuing her PhD.

John joined the Department of Chemistry at Dalhousie University in 1974 as the first Killam Research Professor in the Department of Chemistry. He held that position until 1978 when he became a regular

faculty member. He was a Professor of Chemistry at Dalhousie University from 1974 until his retirement in 2005, and thereafter as Professor *Emeritus*.

John's PhD and later research focused on gas phase kinetics and the electronic spectroscopy of small molecules. He was one of Canada's leading high-resolution spectroscopists. He was held in high regard by his peers in Canada and around the world. His laboratory used visible emission spectroscopy and high-resolution laser spectroscopy for detailed studies on the quantum states (rotational, vibrational and electronic) of small molecules (especially diatomic free radicals and ions) in the gas phase. The laboratory had excellent resources, including scanning grating spectrometers, computational facilities and a then 'state-of-the-art', automated single-frequency ring dye laser. In addition to analyses of line spectra of novel free radicals and molecular ions, his interests included the development of procedures that identified deviations from the Born-Oppenheimer approximation of separation of states.

During his career, John published more than 140 papers, the most recent in 2020 in the *Journal of Molecular Spectroscopy*. He also supervised many Master's and PhD students, who became life-long friends. At the undergraduate level, he mostly taught physical chemistry (including spectroscopy; he will not be forgotten by many Honours students who endured the rigours of his spectroscopy course) and also first-year chemistry especially to Engineering students. His booming voice was ideal for lecturing, and belied his gentler side.

John is survived by his children, Christopher Coxon (Samantha) of Saskatoon and Joanne Coxon ("Pittman") of Halifax, his grandson Matthew, a large family in Malaysia, sister Sheila Oxspring (England), and numerous friends in Canada and around the world. He was predeceased by his wife, Nithi.

Due to Covid and John's wishes, a small gathering will be held at his family home on Saturday April 23. Cremation has taken place. In lieu of flowers, a charity will be established in order to annually provide a bursary to an U18 Dunbrack Soccer player who is entering first year university at Dalhousie. (In 1992, John was the founder of the Halifax Dunbrack Soccer Club, and acted as the club president for many years with the club office in his home.) It will take a bit of time to set up the charity and combine it with John's trust fund. In the meantime, any donations can be made to this Go Fund Me link:

https://www.gofundme.com/f/john-coxon?utm_medium=social&utm_source=messenger&utm_campaign=p_lico+share-sheet The family will provide more detailed information to all who support it once it's finalized.

For further details of John's life, see: https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/halifax-ns/john-coxon-10713408?fbclid=IwAR3_YtuGuF6eiiHoj_BGmXQRye9GO8MH8pvmyBH86fmjjZp-g99h6NUUpU14