

Dr. John Earl (Jack) Abra

Peacefully, on August 27, 2001 at the Riverview Health Centre, Jack passed away at the age of 92. He was predeceased in 1984 by Marion, his beloved wife of 46 years, and sisters Edith Dundas (1988) and Jessie Coubrough (1989). His memory will be lovingly cherished by his friends and family – son Jock and wife Lyn, grandsons Gordon (wife Norah) and Brian; son Doug and wife Glennis, grandchildren Katherine, Allison and Matthew; son Bob and wife Ina, grandchildren Kristine and Gregory; his long time companion Flic Trott; and his many nieces and nephews.

Jack was born on May 1, 1909 in Winnipeg, graduated from St. John's High School and attended the University of Manitoba. He received his DDS from the University of Minnesota (1931), and lettered playing for the University hockey team. The next year he obtained his orthodontic certification from the Forsyth Institute of Harvard University, and began his practice of orthodontia in Winnipeg. In August 1938 he married Marion Winona Smith, and their first son, Jock, was born in August 1939. Less than a month later Jack was called to active duty with the Canadian Army Dental Corps at the beginning of WW II, having enlisted in the Active Militia three years before. By completion of his six years of wartime service (two in Canada and four in England and Europe) he had risen to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He recently recorded his memories of that period in a private document titled "One Man's War".

After the war he returned to his orthodontic practice in Winnipeg and was instrumental in the development of the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Manitoba. He also served as an assistant professor in the Department of Orthodontics from its inception in 1958 until his retirement in 1980. He was a founding member and President of the Canadian Association of Orthodontists (1954-55) and served as President of the Manitoba Dental Association (1959), the Midwestern Society of Orthodontists (1964) and the Canadian Dental Association (1973). In recognition of his many years of outstanding service to the dental and orthodontic communities, he received Distinguished Service Awards from both the University of Manitoba (1983) and the Midwestern Society of Orthodontists (1992), as well as numerous fellowships and honorary memberships. In 1988 the University of Manitoba dedicated a Faculty of Dentistry Seminar Room to him and Marion.

A dedicated member and attendee of Westminster United Church, he served at various times on the General Board, The Westminster Church Foundation, and the Board of Trustees. He was a Commodore of the Winnipeg Canoe Club, and was a life member of the Winnipeg Winter Club, where he was active in figure skating and curling, and where in recent years he enjoyed his daily swim. He served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, and for the past 15 years he and Flic provided delivery services for Meals on Wheels during the winter.

An avid hunter, for many years his weekends in the fall were spent with friends at the shooting lodge in Delta Marsh, while early winter would often find him tracking white-tailed deer through the forests of Manitoba. He spent summers at his beloved Fox Lake, Ontario, as he had done since Marion introduced him to the lake in the 1930's. He helped to found the Wade Fox Lake Campers Association, and served as its first President. An elder statesman of the lake community, at one time he was dubbed "Fox Lake Grampa" by an insightful child. His annual "projects" were legendary among lake residents, and last summer, at age 91, he cleared underbrush and deadfall with a chainsaw to keep himself busy. A gifted storyteller, he had an appropriate tale to relate for almost any occasion, and was known for his comic poems of dedication at the opening of new cabins, outhouses, etc. After much prompting from his grandchildren, he worked on dictating his memoirs over the last two years, completing his wonderful stories of family life and his service during the war just last week.

The family wishes to extend its sincere thanks to the staffs of Victoria General Hospital and the Palliative Care Unit (3 East) at Riverview Health Centre for their compassionate treatment and kind support. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Jack's memory to the Dr. John Abra Orthodontic Fund, Department of Private Funding, University of Manitoba, or the Westminster United Church Foundation. A memorial service to celebrate his life will be held at Westminster United Church, Maryland and Westminster, at 7:30 P.M. on Tuesday, September 4th, 2001.

Thomson Funeral Chapel
783-7211