



On the retirement of Patrick Joseph Henry - A tribute

By Dr David B Dunn

“After the cheers have died down and the stadium is empty, after the headlines have been written and after you are back in the quiet of your room and the championship ring has been placed on the dresser and all the pomp and fanfare has faded, the enduring things that are left are the dedication to excellence, the dedication to victory and the dedication to doing with our lives the very best we can to make the world a better place to live.”

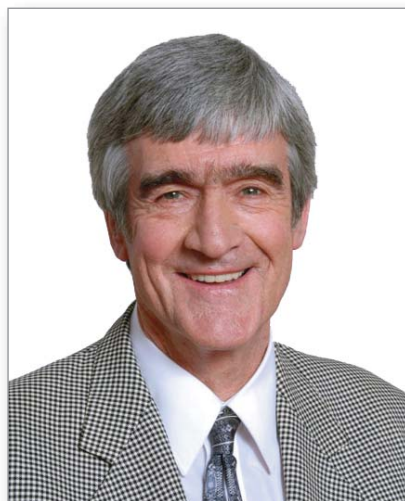
Vincent Thomas Lombardi

Earlier this year, Patrick Henry, one of my dearest friends and the father of dental implantology in Australia, retired from professional life. The unique “canvas” Patrick created over a lifetime in his chosen field of prosthodontics and in particular, in implant prosthodontics, has been a masterpiece. In reviewing his accomplishments, one could quite easily forget that this is not the life work of several exceptionally gifted people but that of a single man!

Patrick has been a superb clinician, researcher, educator, author and administrator, and most importantly, a mentor and inspiration to young and upcoming dental professionals throughout the world.

It would be somewhat dry reading if I was to enumerate all of Patrick’s achievements and awards throughout his career, ranging from his specialist prosthodontic

degree from the University of Indiana; his various distinguished lecturer awards from around the world; numerous honorary memberships and teaching appointments; membership of the State Dental Board of WA; research fellowships; directorship of the Graduate Programme in Prosthodon-



tics in WA; as Chairman, Department of Dentistry, Prince Margaret Hospital for Children; his service on the editorial board and/or review panels of numerous journals in the field of implant prosthodontics; his 100+ scientific journal publications, seven textbook publications, eleven hardcover proceedings and over 20 abstract publications; over 500 formal lectures and educational courses; and numerous awards

and honours including honorary life memberships to the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons, the Australian Prosthodontic Society, the Elmer S Best Award, the Pierre Fauchard Academy Roll of Honour; and Dental Alumni Society, University of Western Australia, as well as being recognised as a Member of the Order of Australia in 2009. Patrick’s various achievements are a book unto themselves!

Patrick graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Dental Science with first class honours from the University of Western Australia in 1961. He was awarded the Hackett Studentship of UWA. He then went to the United States and successfully completed his MSD at the University of Indiana from 1962-63. From 1965-66, he was the Post Doctoral Research Fellow, University of Chicago.

Patrick was awarded his specialist prosthodontic registration in 1967 and with it began an illustrious career spanning the next four decades. Based in Perth, Western Australia, he received the highest level of achievement in clinical practice, research and education, administration and scientific publication.

Patrick has played a significant role at the local, national and international level of supervision and assessment of prosthodontic education and research. He has also been instrumental in establishing a multi-disciplinary protocol for the long-term clinical research in alveolar bone grafting to simplify prosthodontic management of



Patrick received a formal farewell at the Nobel Biocare Scientific Symposium earlier in 2009 which included a special video from long time friends Prof. PI Brånemark and Dr Robert Gottlander.



The Brånemark Centre Team in 1992 at Yallingup, WA. Patrick is seen with visiting implant registrar Dr Park (centre) and Japanese technicians Satoko and Shinobu Uzawa (far right).



Professor P-I Brånemark visiting The Brånemark Centre, 1995 in West Perth, Western Australia.



Patrick and Dr Wally Au-Young (centre), Hong Kong 1992.

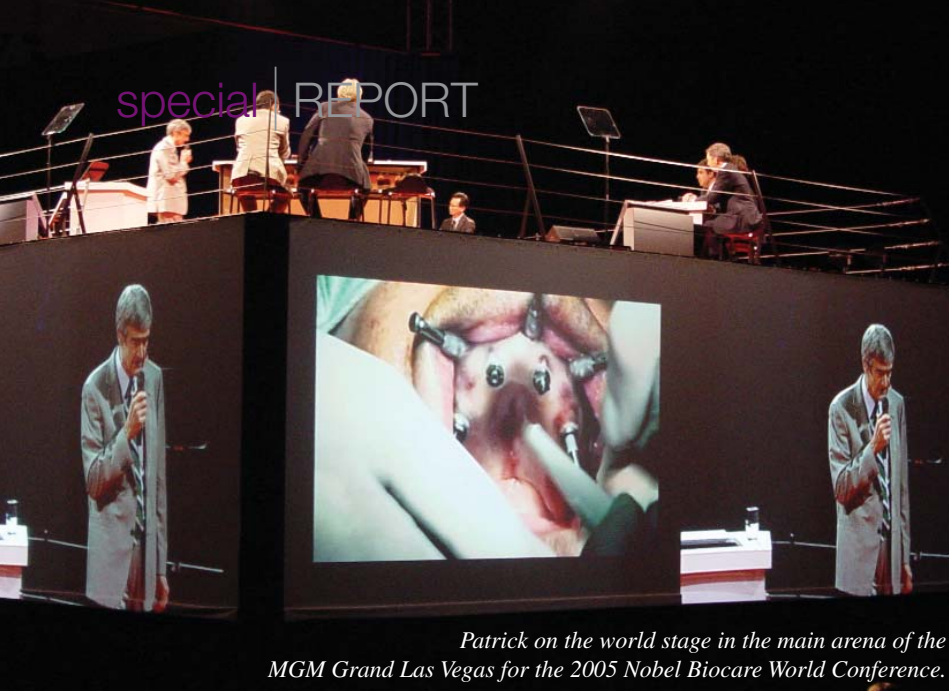


Patrick and Justine Leavy, Hong Kong 1992.

cleft lip and palate patients. Further, he importantly facilitated the transfer of the science of osseointegration into the medical area for prosthetic rehabilitation of congenital, surgical and traumatic defects of the cranio-facial region by use of tissue anchored prostheses. Further, he devel-

oped a collaborative research programme between the University of Goteborg and the Animal Experimentation Centre at the Royal Perth Hospital with current projects including both animal models and human clinical investigations in specific areas of immune response.

Patrick, despite his “retirement” from active clinical practice, continues to be involved with the international prosthodontic community at the administrative and continuing education levels and in the promotion of international prosthodontic research and development, with an



Patrick on the world stage in the main arena of the MGM Grand Las Vegas for the 2005 Nobel Biocare World Conference.

emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration.

He has an enormous grasp of the dental literature and could call on this mental library at will and continues to do so today. He is a formidable opponent to debate any aspect of dentistry with, and most especially in the field of implant prosthodontics. The enormity of this power is most evident when debate is combined with Patrick's vast clinical and research experience and critical appraisal of the literature.

All those who have had the pleasure of learning from Patrick Henry have been educated in a special way; perhaps the highest function of a teacher consists not so much in imparting knowledge as in stimulating the pupil in their love and pursuit. To quote William Yeats, Patrick has not been one to educate by "filling a pool, but the lighting of a fire". He does not tolerate fools or mental laziness; those who have been on the wrong side of his acerbic wit and sarcasm can well attest to this! However, in later years this did mellow ever so slightly!

He has confidently walked the world stage in dentistry, one of the few Australians ever to have achieved global status. He has been justifiably recognized and honoured both locally and worldwide.

Patrick seemed always to have had an exceptional vision of the future, or clearer "crystal ball" than most. In sporting parlance, this is probably best described by the famous ice hockey player Wayne Gretzky: "I skate where the puck is going to be, not where it has been."

Patrick has always been "ahead of the game" and has had the uncanny ability to see where dentistry was going years before its actual arrival and none more so than in the field of dental implants. Here

he researched and pioneered numerous new techniques and technologies, well before their time.

I recall vividly in 1982, having only recently graduated from Sydney University and studying for my primary examinations for the Fellowship of the RACDS, that Patrick sent me P.I. Brånemark's classic publication on his 10 year study of osseointegrated dental implants. At that time, dental implants were "persona non grata" in dentistry and considered highly unpredictable and potentially destructive. I was thus quite sceptical. Patrick encouraged me to pursue this new area of research and treatment, which ultimately led to me travelling to Goteborg in 1984 and visiting Professor Brånemark at his Biotechnology Institute. So began my own life journey with osseointegrated dental implants. A road that without Patrick's vision and encouragement, I most probably would have taken a much more circuitous route and certainly years later!

Whilst Patrick can "walk with the tallest", he is most comfortable with the common man. As Rudyard Kipling best described, he "can walk with Kings yet keep the common touch". He presents no "airs nor graces" and abhors pretence. He speaks his mind clearly and fairly and does not suffer fools, yet is humble in his manner and opinion.

Patrick has earned great loyalty, respect and love from his patients and was able to communicate well with them even in the complex world of prosthodontics. "Why renovate the kitchen when the house is burning down" is one of his sayings that succinctly brought home to his patients the shortcomings of a blinkered and piecemeal approach to treatment as against a

more comprehensive consideration! I recently had the pleasure of seeing one of Patrick's patients whom he had undertaken a full mouth rehabilitation some 30 years prior. The clinical work was, as one may expect, superb, but what impacted me most was this patient's respect and genuine concern for Patrick's well being and their determination that I convey to Patrick, their warmest and special wishes.

Patrick is a loyal friend and this loyalty transcends normal boundaries. He has his squash and tennis mates, his farming buddies and old school and University friends both here and in the US and of course his international community of dental colleagues. Many seek counsel and assistance from Patrick and sometimes this has been given at a personal cost, but no one would be any the wiser.

However, Patrick is no saint! No man can achieve what he has achieved and driven himself so hard over five decades in his relentless pursuit of excellence, without stepping on toes and ruffling some feathers.

"I know the price of success; dedication, hard work, and an unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen" said Frank Lloyd Wright.

Patrick's wife and life partner Kerry, often and understandably had to compromise on family life, as Patrick continued to pursue his life's ambition. One may argue it was somewhat selfish but no man could achieve what Patrick has done without great sacrifice and self-determination.

One may then ponder that such a driven and devoted person as Patrick could not be close to his family, yet nothing could be further from the truth. He has a very close and special relationship with Kerry and all of their three children - Nicholas, Rebecca and Shamus; and seven grandchildren (at latest count!) and especially enjoys spending quality time with his family at their farm just north of Perth. While I am sure the family is looking forward to seeing much more of PJH over the coming years, I am equally sure he will find new challenges and projects ahead. It is the nature of the beast!

"The heights by great men reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night." Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

To my mentor, a very special friend and a unique human being, whom in my career in dentistry I have seen no greater contributor nor equal, thank you for your enormous contributions and positive impact you have made on the lives of so many.