Dr. Richard Roland Baker

1945–2007

Richard Baker died at Easter 2007 after a very short illness. It is sad that he died so soon after his retirement from the British American Tobacco Company at the end of 2005, and just as he was beginning to enjoy his new life, even though tobacco science still had a part to play.

In 2006 Richard received the Tobacco Science Research Conference Lifetime Achievement Award, and at this time Thomas Perfetti, in this journal, described his distinguished scientific career in some detail. I will not repeat the list of these remarkable achievements, but can only add that he may well be the only scientist ever to be awarded the ultimate research degree, a D.Sc., by a British University for research activities while working for a tobacco company. Bearing in mind anti-tobacco sentiment this was a breathtaking achievement.

Richard joined B.A.T. in 1971 and came to live quite near us on the outskirts of Southampton. We got to know Richard and Jackie well. Being a few years older several of the younger Thornton's then acted as baby-sitters as the younger Baker's appeared on the scene. Richard's enthusiasm for jogging and long-distance running was well known. As he jogged by the entrance to my house on foggy mornings he became a well-known health hazard, both to himself and to me.

Richard's interests also included local politics and schools and indicated his great interest in people and their well-being. He was a kind and thoughtful colleague. When we moved house in 1976 Richard and Jackie sent us a good luck card, repeated in 1994 when we moved, briefly and spectacularly, to New Delhi.

Richard's last years were evidently as full as ever, and he was still publishing scientific papers in his role as a Consultant. He was close to his family and children. Grandchildren, of whom he was very fond, had arrived. Richard and Jackie had also acquired a holiday home in their beloved Lake District in N.W. England.

I, and everyone who met him, will have fond recollections of Richard as a delightful person and as an outstanding scientist, and above all we would like Jackie to know how we regarded him.

Ray Thornton, June 2007
(former Scientific and Regulatory Issues Manager, B.A.T.)