

18 April 2013

Robert (Bob) MacLennan 1931–2013

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) joins the international cancer community in mourning the passing, on 17 March 2013, of Robert (Bob) MacLennan.

Bob had a burning curiosity about the world and lived a life filled with quests and discoveries. After completing his medical studies at the University of Queensland in 1954, he served as a medical officer and surgeon in Papua New Guinea, London, and Uganda. He then completed a Master of Epidemiology course at Tulane University in New Orleans, where he taught from 1964 to 1971, also spending periods teaching and doing research in Ecuador and Colombia.

At IARC, Bob held a position as Epidemiologist from 1971 to 1979. Here, he was instrumental in developing programs for cancer registration around the world and was also involved in multinational collaborative studies of colorectal cancer. He served as Calum Muir's assistant and was responsible for the Agency's first publication on cancer registration, *Cancer Registration and its Techniques*, in 1978.

Bob returned to Australia in 1979, to the Commonwealth Institute of Health, University of Sydney, where cancer epidemiology remained his research focus. In 1982, he moved to the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, where he established the Institute's first program of research in cancer epidemiology. In the 1980s, his research interests included exploring the association between diet and cancer and the relationship of moles to melanoma. By the 1990s, his interests extended to exploring the association between betel quid and oral cancer. During this era, Bob was one of the first to recognize the value of genetic epidemiology as an adjunct to the traditional focus of epidemiologists on environmental risk factors.

Bob's eminence in the field was reflected in appointments to various national and international bodies, including the WHO Expert Panel on Cancer. In addition to Bob's passion for research, he had a great and abiding interest in cultural, anthropological, musical, and culinary pursuits. A sample of his extensive musical recordings from Papua New Guinea was included on the famed Golden Record on the Voyager space probe, launched in 1977 and still travelling beyond the solar system and into deep space.

Robert MacLennan died on 17 March 2013. Our thoughts go to his ex-wife Wendy, their three sons, Don, Bill, and Robert, and five grandchildren.