

John Dunham States

Orthopaedic surgeon and motorsport physician who successfully pushed for seat belt laws in the US

John Dunham States (b 1925; q Harvard Medical School 1949), died from congestive heart failure on 26 March 2015.

As a young orthopaedic surgeon and race track physician at the Watkins Glen International automobile track in upstate New York, John States made an observation that was to revolutionise injury prevention.

States saw race car drivers walking away from horrific, high speed crashes relatively unscathed. Meanwhile, ordinary motorists brought to the emergency room after less serious crashes would have terrible injuries. A key explanation for this stark contrast was that race car drivers were wearing seat belts.

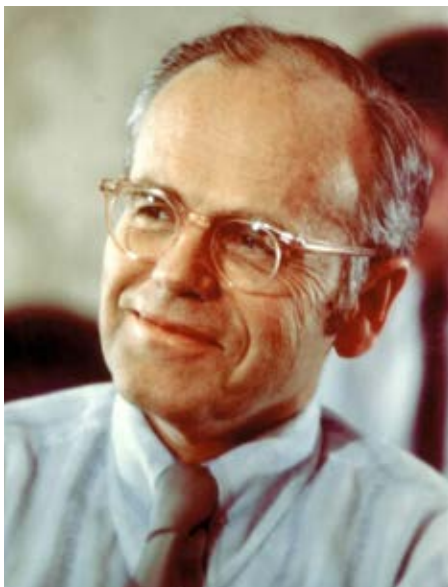
So began States's extraordinary life of injury research and advocacy, which ultimately led to the 1984 passage of a law requiring drivers and front seat passengers in New York State to wear seatbelts—the first law of its kind in the nation. Since then, 48 other states have passed seat belt laws. New Hampshire—fiercely libertarian—is the last remaining state in the country without such a law, as befits its motto, “Live Free or Die.” The US Department of Transportation estimates that seat belts have saved over a quarter of a million lives nationwide.

States was an introverted child who loved to build things. He built toy cars when he was six and soapbox derby cars when he was seven. By the age of 10, he was constructing makeshift powered vehicles from parts of washing machines and lawnmowers. He drove himself to high school in a motorised vehicle, with three wheels and two seats, which he had made himself.

From engineering to orthopaedics

States wanted to be an engineer, but his father, a doctor, persuaded him that a career in medicine would help him come out of his shell. After medical school at Harvard, he interned at Rochester General Hospital, where he was drawn to orthopaedics because it allowed him to pursue his interest in mechanical engineering. After residencies in orthopaedic surgery at the Lackland Air Force Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital, he returned to Rochester General Hospital, becoming chief of orthopaedic surgery in 1967.

His daughter, Katherine Burke, describes her father as a gentle, calm, and patient man, who spent every vacation taking his four children—two sons and two daughters—on camping trips where they “learned to do and make things.” At home, they would join him in his basement



workshop, kitted out with a lathe, drills, and table saws for metal welding and carpentry, where he would build his own operating tools and surgical implants. “He was at his most comfortable in his shop, with his machines,” says Burke.

Car safety became his passion. “He was in a unique position to understand both the structure of cars and the structure of human bodies,” says Julian Chang, who was trained by States and is now an orthopaedic surgeon in private practice in Hong Kong and physician for the Hong Kong Olympics team.

One particular patient had a lifelong effect on States's career—a woman who was brought to the emergency room with two broken shins. She had been driving a Volkswagen when she ran into the back of a truck. States tracked down and photographed the damaged car. He discovered that she broke her shins because of a mismatch between the height of the rear bumper of the truck and the front bumper of the Volkswagen.

From then on, after seeing a patient injured in a car crash, States would embark on classic “shoe leather epidemiology,” searching for the wreckage of the car to document the design weaknesses that were maiming and killing his patients. He often brought his children along. “We would drive around to junk yards,” says Burke, searching for a particular wreck.

Throughout the 1960s States created a database of these photographs and linked them to specific injuries, which led to important changes in car design. According to Chang, he was self-

lessly passionate about this research, funding it entirely himself until he received his first federal research grant in 1969. He would later spend a decade (1990-2000) as a visiting scientist at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the division of injury and epidemiology control.

Injury control and prevention

States shaped the area of injury prevention and control in other important ways. He co-founded the Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine in 1957, a unique organisation that brought together the doctors who could bear witness to the terrible suffering wrought by road crashes with engineers from academia and industry who could design safer cars.

He was also instrumental in developing the abbreviated injury scale (AIS), first published in 1969,¹ a standardised tool for classifying the severity of trauma that has been updated multiple times and remains one of the world's most widely used injury scales.

But his greatest legacy was seat belt legislation. States had long argued that automobile safety was “a medical problem with a legal solution.” Marshalling a wealth of crash investigation data that used the AIS to show that seat belts were protective, States led the slow but eventually successful effort to lobby the New York state legislature

to mandate seat belt use. On 13 April 1988, in the New York State Executive Chamber, Governor Mario Cuomo awarded States with a citation for his 30 years of research and service, saying that States was a “prime mover” in getting the law passed.

Albert King, distinguished professor of bioengineering at Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, remembers his longtime colleague States as “a self effacing, humble man.” His success on seat belts, says King, was achieved in a very quiet way. “He convinced people with his logic, rather than by screaming or hollering,” says King.

After States died, his daughter Katherine found a little note that he carried in his wallet, written by his own father. The note, titled “Orders of the Day,” contained a list of 15 rules for living, handed down from father to son. One of them was: “Change happens—but not overnight.”

States leaves his wife of 63 years, Sally Johnson States; four children; and six grandchildren.

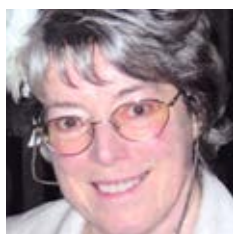
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References are in the version on thebmj.com.

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Sylvia Ann Marletta



Geriatrician (b 1937; q Edinburgh 1960), d 4 March 2015.

Sylvia Ann Marletta (née Campopiano) worked briefly in general practice before focusing her medical career on geriatric medicine. She worked chiefly in Law Hospital and Roadmeetings Hospital, Carlisle, and latterly in Hairmyres Hospital, East Kilbride. For much of her career, she worked seven day weeks, late into the evening, and was known to remain in hospital to "hold the hand" of dying patients who were otherwise alone. After retiring from clinical practice for the third and final time in 2005, Sylvia joined the Secular Franciscan Order and also became involved in Fertility Care Scotland. Her health gradually failed as a consequence of five years of cancer, cardiac arrhythmias, and heart failure. She leaves Oscar, her husband of nearly 50 years; their six children; and six grandchildren.

Brendan J Martin, Brigitte Yip, Marco Marletta

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;350:h2968

John Hedley Cule

Former general practitioner and medical historian (b 1921; q King's College London 1943; MBE, MD Camb, FRCP Ed, MRCS Eng, FRCGP), d 10 April 2015.

John Hedley Cule was educated at Kingswood School in Bath, where he became interested in the history of medicine. While doing national service in the Royal Army Medical Corps, he married Joyce Leslie Bonser in 1944. From 1948 to 1971 he worked as a GP in the military town of Camberley. In 1972 the family returned to his native Wales, where his major activity as a medical historian began. English language editor of the journal of the International Society for the History of Medicine, he was elected its world president in 1998. In 2005 he was awarded the MBE for his contribution

to mental health services in west Wales. Predeceased by his wife, Leslie, in 1999, he leaves three children.

John Blair

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;350:h3100

Richard Cenric Humphreys



General practitioner Crickhowell, Powys (b 1924; q Edinburgh 1946; OBE, MD, FRCGP DRCOG), d 14 May 2015.

Richard Cenric Humphreys ("Cen") was much involved in medical education. He led a vigorous campaign to save the Crickhowell War Memorial Hospital, which was closed in 1970. Cen served on NHS committees and working parties and was the GP member of the Powys area health authority from 1974 to 1978. He served on the Committee on Review of Medicines from 1978 to 1984 and chaired the Welsh council of the RCGP in 1986-89. He wrote frequently in the medical press and was a regular contributor to the journal *World Medicine*. In his retirement, he was awarded an OBE in 1985 for services to medicine in Wales. Predeceased by his wife, Norah, in 2003, he leaves a daughter, two sons, and eight grandchildren.

David Humphreys

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;350:h3051

James Michael Taylor



Former general practitioner Peterhead (b 1932; q Aberdeen University 1955), died from metastatic carcinoma of the prostate on 7 November 2014.

After national service, Michael Taylor ("Mike") returned home to Peterhead for his professional life's work, joining

his older brother and father in the group practice originally established by the latter. He encouraged multidisciplinary collaborative working and persuaded all GPs in Peterhead to work together as partners in a new health centre. He subsequently led the successful case for the reconstruction of a new combined community hospital health centre building on the same site. He originated GP postgraduate training at Peterhead and was doctor to the local RNLI station, where he developed new evacuation techniques for sea casualties. Outside medicine, he was an intrepid mountaineer. Predeceased by his wife, Dorothy, he leaves three sons, and eight grandchildren.

Lewis Ritchie

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;350:h2970

Sean Vesey



Consultant urologist Southport and Ormskirk Hospital (b 1954; q University College Cork 1979; FRCSI, FRCS, FEBU), died from metastatic prostate cancer on 18 January 2015.

Sean Vesey was appointed consultant urologist at Southport and Ormskirk Hospital in 1991, where he set up the urology services, working singlehandedly for five years. He carried out his first laparoscopic nephrectomy in 1994, was the lead laparoscopic surgeon for the Merseyside region between 2001 and 2013, and taught the relevant skills to juniors and colleagues from all over the UK and Ireland. In 2007, with the centralisation of cancer services in the UK, he moved to develop the laparoscopic service at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital. Sean was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer in January 2011, a disease that he had spent his working life treating in his own patients. He leaves his wife, Rosemary, and two children.

Stuart Lloyd, Dmitri Artiukh,

Mike Zeiderman

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;350:h2973

Bertram Winocour



Former general practitioner Bridgeton, Glasgow (b 1924; q Anderson College of Medicine, Glasgow, 1947; MRCS LRCP), died from gastrointestinal haemorrhage and myelofibrosis on 10 April 2015.

Bertram Winocour was a general practitioner for 45 years. His contribution to healthcare in an area of major socioeconomic deprivation was marked by a feature on him in the *Glasgow Evening Times*, when he commented on the changing picture of healthcare over five decades, noting over that time the shift in emphasis from managing childhood ailments and serious infectious disease to care for stress related illness at a time of rising unemployment and the increasing problem of drug misuse. Latterly he developed an interest in hypnotherapy, which he successfully employed in managing various behavioural problems. Outside medicine he enjoyed golf, cinema and the theatre, good food, and a "nice merlot." He leaves his wife of almost 60 years, two children, and four grandchildren.

Peter Winocour

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;351:h4071

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