

## **A Little Red Book -an encounter with Dr. Rowan-**

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On my bookshelf, there is a book with a red cover titled "Blood Cell Volume Analysis - A New Screening Technology for the Haematologist." The copyright page shows that the book was published by a British publisher in 1983. I happened to find this book in August 1984 on Professor Thom's desk at the Department of Medicine, Free University of Berlin, where I was studying at the time. Casually flipping through the pages, I found the book very interesting. It was mainly about the Coulter counter and its principle as well as the interpretation of size distribution of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets, which was the nascent area at that time. After asking Professor Thom to lend it to me, I photocopied the entire book at a stationery shop in the city on the same day. The back of the copy book I bound says "5.4 marks for photocopy on 13 August 1984." As I was still unable to freely read English and medical terms then, all the pages are filled with penciled notes from dictionaries. I remember reading the book voraciously in any spare moment I had during my research with Professor Thom.

This was my first encounter with Dr. Martin Rowan, who was the writer of the book and a leading person then in promoting standardization in hematology especially as Executive Secretary of the International Council for Standardization in Haematology (ICSH). Later, having the luck to be at a related conference in Europe with Professor Thom, who was a member of the ICSH, I nervously introduced myself to Dr. Rowan. He responded to me with kind and humorous conversation.

Then I became an accredited member of the ICSH. He treated me good-naturedly every time we met at the conference for the standardization and development of standardized assessment. With the attendance of a number of representatives of major suppliers of blood cell counters of the time in addition to hematologists, the members of the conference held serious discussions on every new idea of standardized assessment, which sometimes led to heated argument among members. On any of such occasions, I never once saw Dr. Rowan lose his temper. He always chaired the conferences calmly with a benign smile.

He had a number of opportunities to visit Japan in relation to the standardization activities. I was honored to be his host on every visit, resulting in me developing a closer relationship with him not only in business, but also on a personal level.

Last year, at the time when a quarter of a century had passed since my first encounter with him, I learned that he was suffering from cancer. Although his physical condition prevented him from undertaking business trips, we kept in contact through e-mail. However, his e-mail exchanges became fewer this year as his condition further deteriorated.



*Photo 1*

At the end of January on the last year, due in part to his strong wish, I visited him at his house in Glasgow. With Mrs. Rowan's hearty cooking, we had a number of glasses of his favorite whiskey LAGAVULIN (**Photo 1**). On each glass, he said it was the last toast.

He was then hospitalized in a hospice until early May when he passed away. I revisited his house in June. After being cremated, he now sleeps forever in his favorite garden of his home (**Photo 2**).



*Photo 2*

Offering a long deep prayer before the flower bed of his grave, I swore to him that I would continue the activities for standardization in hematology which he had passionately promoted. At the present time when quality assessment systems of clinical laboratory tests are being established, such as ISO15189, ISO17025 and CAP inspection, the activities in hematology he promoted are widely bearing fruit. I believe that following his will by further contributing to the next generation is the only way to repay our debt to him.