
Obituary

**John Ernest Amoore (1930–1998)**

John E. Amoore, PhD, a pioneer and prominent leader in olfactory science, died unexpectedly in San Francisco, California, on January 26, 1998. He is survived by his wife, Ani, and two children, Ron and Marie.

John was born in Derbyshire, England, to Ronald and Kathleen Amoore, chemists working for the British government in the war industry. Although his early years were spent on a chicken farm in Wales, he received his secondary education at Clifton, an excellent private school in Bristol. At Clifton, he obtained a scholarship to attend Oxford, where he studied biochemistry at Queen's College (1956–1958). It was during his undergraduate years that he became interested in olfaction and proposed his famous 'Stereochemical Theory of Odor', which was the dominant theory of odor recognition for several decades and laid the foundation for the modern pursuit and identification of odorant receptors. Of particular importance was John's study of specific anosmias, a phenomenon which must be accounted for by any theorist of odor quality coding.

After graduation from Oxford, John spent a year in the Department of Chemistry at the California Institute of Technology, where he worked with Dr Linus Pauling. Subsequently, he became an officer in the British army and was stationed in Cyprus. It was in Cyprus that he met his future wife, Ani. After spending two years in the army, John returned to Oxford to finish his PhD in Biochemistry, working under Sir Hans Krebs. John married Ani in 1959 and then moved to Scotland, where he was a professor at

Edinburgh University for three years. Largely because of frustration with cold weather, the young couple decided to immigrate to Berkeley, California, and make the Bay Area their home.

John avidly pursued his interests in olfactory coding from 1963 to 1978 while working as a research chemist for the US Department of Agriculture in Albany. It was during this time that he further elaborated and consolidated his stereochemical theory, building sophisticated molecular models to explore his hypotheses and increasing the list of chemicals for which specific anosmias occurred. It was also during this time that he performed early studies on the influences of such factors as age and gender on the ability to smell.

In 1978, John founded the environmental consulting and manufacturing firm, Olfacto-Labs, where he pioneered the development of practical and commercially viable olfactory tests that are now used throughout the world. His environmental consulting services were actively sought after by both governmental agencies and industrial concerns. Through such services, John expressed his true concern for the environment, working closely with his colleague Robert O'Neill on the development of new means for detecting and quantifying contamination of groundwater and earth.

During his lifetime John was the recipient of numerous awards and honors. For example, California's previous Governor, George Deukmejian, honored John by appointing him to a major scientific advisory committee of the California Air Resources Board. More recently, John was honored for his contributions to olfactory science by his inclusion in the '2000 Outstanding People of the 20th Century' published by the International Biographical Center in Cambridge, England.

In addition to his illustrious scientific career, which spanned over 40 years, John was intimately involved in community and family affairs. He was an active member of St Vartans church in Albany, California, and served as its treasurer and member of the Parish Council for over a decade. He has appeared on television on behalf of the Armenian cause, and regularly participated in the Armenian Professional Society.

The chemical senses community has lost a friend, mentor and advocate. Those who knew John always will be grateful for his kindness and sincerity, and will forever remember him as a model not only for how science should be conducted, but how gentlemen should conduct their affairs.

Richard L. Doty

