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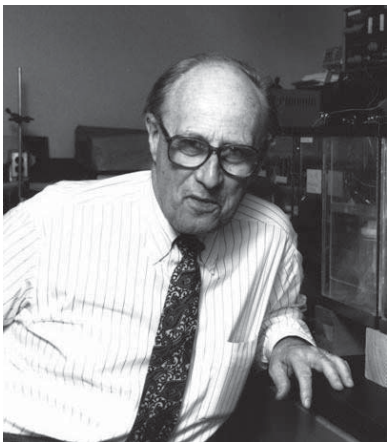
OBITUARY

Professor John O'M. Bockris, 1923–2013



Bernhardt Patrick John O'Mara Bockris arrived on January 5, 1923, in Johannesburg, South Africa, and left on July 7, 2013, in Florida after spending 90 years on this planet. In between these events, he explored this world with intensity, courage, and creativity. He sought education at Brighton Technology College and obtained his Ph.D. from the Imperial College of Science and Technology in England. Later, the University of London awarded him the additional distinction of a D.Sc. degree. With these tools in hand, he went on to become one of the world's experts in Electrochemistry and taught many students most of what they know about the subject through his lectures, many papers, and books. Much of this pioneering work was done while he taught at the Imperial College in London (1945–1953), at the University of Pennsylvania (1953–1972), and with a short stay at Flinders University in South Australia (1972–1978). As a result, he was awarded much recognition for his contribution to this growing, but conventional science, and is now considered the father of modern electrochemistry.

But then John crossed a forbidden boundary when in 1989, while teaching at the University of Texas in College Station, he started a study of what is called cold fusion—but first some background.

Martin Fleischmann, a student of Bockris when he taught at the Imperial College, who later became a famous expert in electrochemistry, and Stanley Pons, the Chairman of the Chemistry Department at the University of Utah, announced to the world in March of 1989 that they had initiated a fusion reaction, with the resulting heat and nuclear products, using only an electrolytic cell (Fleischmann, Pons, & Hawkins 1989, Fleischmann 2008). This discovery had and still has the potential to change life as we know it and to solve some of the pressing problems created by the excesses of modern life. Consequently, John and hundreds of scientists in laboratories

all over the world attempted to replicate the claim. Many were successful, but most were not. Nevertheless, because of his skill and information he obtained from Fleischmann, John was among the first to successfully make tritium using the electrochemical method (Kainthla et al. 1989, Packham et al. 1989, Lin et al. 1990). His success was shortly followed by many other successful efforts at major laboratories all over the world. As a result, the discovery has been shown to be a real effect (Storms 2007, 2010) that is on its way to commercial application. But in 1989, and even now but to a lesser degree, the claim was rejected by conventional science.

John's troubles started when Gary Taubes, an author of a book (Taubes 1993) about the discovery, accused John's graduate student of adding tritium to the cell and then pretending it had been made by the cold fusion reaction. This accusation was published in *Science* (Taubes 1990) without any proof, such was the hostility and certainty of the scientific establishment that the claim was false. The resulting investigation by the university could find no evidence to support the accusation (Anderson, Bockris, Worledge, & Taube 1990), but John's reputation was now in question and rivals at the university smelled blood. His troubles only deepened when he tried to convert mercury to gold using a method suggested by Joe Champion (1994). This led to his increased interest in transmutation as a result of the cold fusion effect (Bockris 2004), which now has a rich literature of support (Srinivsan, Miley, & Storms 2011). As a result, professors at the university attempted to strip John of his Distinguished Professor Award and force him out of the university (Bockris 2000). Fortunately, calmer heads prevailed, but the experience made John an outcast and brought into question the level of academic freedom possible at Texas A&M. In spite of these distractions and the resulting pain to him and his family, John continued to study cold fusion and was awarded the Preparata Medal in 2012 by his grateful friends and students in the growing field now called Low Energy Nuclear Reaction (LENR). John also contributed to the development of hydrogen (Bockris 2011) as the fuel of the future and started to take an interest in natural gas (Bockris 2012). As can be expected of such an intelligent and creative person, John spent time during his final years trying to understand the event of death and what happens next. Naturally, he took a scientific approach that avoided much of the distraction and myth contributed by religion. I'm sure John now knows whether his understanding is correct or not because he expected awareness to continue after death. Regardless of what happens next, his example of great courage and curiosity is rare and will be missed by everyone who knew him.

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