

This is a sad day indeed for me as I mourn the first anniversary of John's death. Throughout my own physical trauma and emotional turmoil following a sudden debilitating stroke, John was such a comfort to me as I lay helpless in the university hospital of Padua — until he, too, fell increasingly weak from what turned out to be a terminal form of leukaemia. The suddenness of his death was a profound shock to us all, including the wonderful Italian doctors treating him at the time. Words fail me as I reflect on the abrupt end of our harmonious marriage and shared existence for almost thirty years : as John so often reminded me, we were a perfect “nation of two”.

Many of you wrote me extraordinarily moving condolences and tributes to John's presence in your own lives, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your continuing support and dedication to his memory. As you well know, the history of science was his passion until the very end, and his last lecture in Padua, delivered just two months before 5 November 2023, focused on the history of physics.

Although I could not share the more technical aspects of his work, I loved acting as his sounding board — and I was even able to moderate some of the more critical aspects of his writing! (I did not always succeed, and his extreme irony sometimes got the better of him...). However, he was just as critical of his own work, and his famous vertical pencil lines through drafts on yellow scratch paper often littered the floor of his Shilton study at the foot of the spiral staircase leading to his library... May his love of history and devotion to the task in hand live on through your own research and writings.

Finally, I wish to extend my special thanks to Dan, Mario, and Jessica for organizing this memorial session at the HSS meeting in Merida, and to all of you for sharing your thoughts and reminiscences. I wish I could join you, but I will be present in spirit — as will the indomitable JLH himself.