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Dr. John Mercieca, D.D.S., D.Sc. (Honoris Causa)

Dr. JOHN H. MERCIECA D.Sc.(Honoris Causa), D.D.S.

Born in Floriana, Dr. John H. Mercieca received his secondary education at the Lyceum, from where he matriculated in 1930 as a student of the University and in 1937 graduated as one of the seven students who had completed the First Course of Dental Surgery every held at the University of Malta, being placed first in order of merit.

After a period of housemanship at the Government Dental Clinic attached to the Council Civil Hospital, Dr. Mercieca set himself in private practice, but, in 1940, at the outbreak of hostilities in Malta, he volunteered to take charge of the Dental Clinic set up in the Attard-Lija-Balzan district, to care for the needs of the hundreds of refugees who had flocked to the centre of the island, from the Cottonera and outlying districts, which post he held until June 1941 when he joined the Army Dental Corps in the rank of Lieutenant. A year later he was promoted to the rank of Captain and was attached to the 161 Field Ambulance R.A.M.C. Early in 1942 he underwent a Course in General Anaesthesia, under the Senior Anaesthetist Major Buckley at the 90 General Hospital (Mtara) where he served for nearly a year. In 1946 he was demobilised, when his age group was due, going back to the private practice of his profession.

In 1938, Dr. Mercieca was appointed Examiner in Oral Medicine and Surgery at the University of Malta, in which post he uninterruptedly served for 40 successive years up to 1978, when he retired at his own request.

Between 1942 and 1945 he was elected as one of the two representatives in the interests of the Dental Profession, on the Faculty Board of Medicine and Surgery and in 1945 was elected a Member of the Special Board of Dental Surgery. In 1954, when the Faculty of Dental Surgery was for the first time, created at the University, Dr. Mercieca was elected a member and continued to be regularly elected up to 1978.

From 1944 to 1959, Dr. Mercieca was yearly elected a Member of the Medical Board at the Department of Health and in 1959, when the Medical Council was created, he was elected a Member and has ever since been re-elected every three years to the present day. From 1968 to 1977, when it stopped functioning, Dr. Mercieca was also elected, every 3 years, as a Member of the Advisory and Executive Board at the Department of Health.

Dr. Mercieca is a Founder Member of the Dental Association of Malta, which was set up in 1944, having served as its Secretary for 13 years, between 1948 and 1961. In 1949 he represented the Association at the Annual Meeting of the British Dental Association, held at Scarborough as an official representative. In 1961, following the retirement of the late Prof. E. Lapira, he was elected President, to which office he was regularly, re-elected biennially up to 1981, when the Council of the Dental Association of Malta elected him Honorary Life President to serve with full voting powers on the Council. Between 1951 and 1960 Dr. Mercieca held the post of National Treasurer of the Federation Dentaire Internationale.

Dr. Mercieca was a Founder Member of the Malta Federation of Professional Bodies, serving for a number of years as a Member of the Council and in the office of Vice-President in 1980 – 81.

Having always had Philately so much to his heart since his early boy-hood days and having belonged to two previous Philatelic Societies, which had a very short span of life, naturally enough, Dr. Mercieca, has taken and is still taking a keen interest in the continued active and healthy state of this present Malta Philatelic Society, founded in 1966, and of which he is a Founder Member and its President for 17 consecutive years since 1971. He is also a Member of the Malta Study Circle of London.

In 1958, Dr. Mercieca, was appointed a Member of the Stamp Design Advisory Board at the Department of Posts, on which he regularly served up to 1973. In 1987 he was again re-appointed and is still serving.

Dr. Mercieca is highly interested in and is a keen student of foreign languages and apart from his national tongue and English, he speaks fluently Italian, French and German and has a good working knowledge of the Spanish and Russian languages, which he can also read and write. When in 1962 the German-Maltese Circle was founded he was one of its Founder Members and between 1967 and 1970 its Vice-President.

On the occasion of the joint celebrations held by the University of Malta and the Dental Association of Malta, between the 6th and the 11th October 1987, to commemorate the Graduation of the seven students in the First Course of Dental Surgery 1937, the Council of The University of Malta approved the resolution passed by the Senate recommending that the Degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) be conferred on Dr. John H. Mercieca and ordered that this distinction be conferred on him, on 10th October 1987 during the Fiftieth Anniversary of the first graduates in the Course of Dental Surgery 1937.

Our Philatelic Society extends to Dr. J.H. Mercieca our warmest congratulations.