

# In Memoriam

## Robert A. Dobie, M.D.

July 26, 1945 – September 4, 2019

by Elliott H. Berger, Susan Cooper, and Bill Clark

*Friends and Collaborators*

Long-time NHCA member and pioneer of hearing loss prevention Robert A. Dobie, M.D., passed away on Wednesday, September 4, 2019, in San Antonio, Texas. He was 74.

Bob grew up all over America as the son of U.S. Naval Officer, Rear Admiral E.W. Dobie, Jr. and Geraldine Frances Bonnington Dobie. Bob received his undergraduate and MD degrees from, and completed a surgical residency at, Stanford University. He was a National Merit and Phi Beta Kappa scholar, and also served as the president of his medical school class. Consistent with his childhood experiences, his academic and clinical careers were similarly diverse, both institutionally and geographically. Bob completed research and clinical fellowships in auditory physiology and neurotology with Charles I. Berlin at the Kresge Hearing Research Laboratory of the South and Professor Ugo Fisch at University Hospital, Zurich. He joined the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Washington in 1975, rapidly rising to full professor. He was a founder and the initial Director of the Virginia Merrill Bloedel Hearing Research Center there from 1988-1990.

In 1990, Bob was appointed Professor and Chairman of the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (OHNS) at the University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, and he made this his academic base for the remainder of his career. He also served as the Director of Extramural Research at the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), from 1999-2002. After completing his service to the NIDCD, Bob accepted an appointment as Clinical Professor of OHNS at the University of California, Davis. In 2008, Bob returned to San Antonio and the University of Texas.

Bob's impact on research and clinical practice are difficult to overstate. In particular, his work and service on regulatory committees related to the effects of noise exposure and aging on hearing in the population led the field, and



provided valuable insights for the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). His papers on hearing levels of American adults have redefined the roles of aging and noise exposure on age-related hearing loss, and related national and international standards have been revised to incorporate these findings. Similarly, his work on the global burden of hearing loss and the efficacy of hearing conservation programs and standards are destined to influence our efforts to conserve the hearing of individuals as they work, play and age. These contributions will have lasting effects around the world.

Bob Dobie was a valued colleague and personal friend to many at NHCA, some for nearly 40 years. His commitment to the mission and people of NHCA is reflected in his active participation, regular attendance at the NHCA Conference, and thoughtful and insightful contributions in the form of presentations, participation in panel debates, and articles for the Spectrum. He served as an NHCA council member and task force participant, and on the council of the NHCA Scholarship Foundation. Bob received NHCA's Outstanding Hearing Conservationist Award in 2005 and Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017. He also brought his talent for applying science and pragmatism to the practice of hearing conservation by serving 10 years on the Council for Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation (CAOHC). He served as an officer, a committee chair, a contributor to the CAOHC manual and was featured in the first video series for OHC courses. Bob was instrumental in the development of policies and procedures that have guided CAOHC into the leadership position it enjoys today.

Bob served as president of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology in 1992, and received both

a Presidential Citation from the Triological Society and a Distinguished Service Award from the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery. In 2017, he was awarded the Carhart Memorial Award by the American Auditory Society. Along with his service on the editorial boards of well-respected clinical and hearing-research journals, he authored over 200 scientific publications, including a seminal book on the medical-legal evaluation of hearing loss. Among his many honors and awards, he particularly valued the Driftwood Award for outstanding teaching and mentoring skills, which he received five times from the surgical residents at the University of Washington.

Bob is survived by his wife of 47 years, Christine, daughters, Pamela Dobie Key and Monica Dobie Daly, son, William James Dobie, and numerous grandchildren. Bob

will be remembered by his colleagues and friends for his unwavering integrity, well-honed wit, incisive reasoning, outstanding and compassionate service as a physician and surgeon, passionate teaching, insightful science, and being a dedicated teammate. Those who wish to honor Bob may make contributions to St. Vincent de Paul or Haven for Hope at <https://svdpsa.org/donate> or <https://www.havenforhope.org/donate>.

In closing it is apropos to report that the NHCA and the entire professional community will continue to directly benefit from Bob's work, as his family as kindly agreed to allow us to move key portions of his personal website to our [NHCA website](#). You can find his annotated references and hearing loss calculators by going to the Resources pull-down menu and selecting Robert Dobie Memorial Library.

### Selected Recent Contributions

Royster LH, Royster, JD, and Dobie R. (2020 in press). "Prediction and Analysis of the Hearing Characteristics of Noise-Exposed Populations or Individuals," in Meinke DK, Berger EH, Neitzel R, Driscoll DP, Bright K (eds.): *The Noise Manual, 6th edition*, AIHA, Falls Church, VA.

Dobie R and Cooper, S. (2020 in press). "Workers Compensation," in Meinke DK, Berger EH, Neitzel R, Driscoll DP, Bright K (eds.): *The Noise Manual, 6th edition*, AIHA, Falls Church, VA.

Berger EH and Dobie R (2019 in press). "Acoustic Trauma from Continuous Noise: Minimum Exposures, Issues in Clinical Trial Design, and Comments on MRI exposures," J. Acoust. Soc. Am. Special Issue on Noise-Induced Hearing Loss: Translating Risk from Animal Models to Real-World Environments.

Hoffman HJ, Dobie RA, Losonczy KG, Themann, CL, and Flamme GA. (2019) "Kids Nowadays Hear Better Than We Did: Declining Prevalence of Hearing Loss in US Youth, 1966-2010," *Laryngoscope*, 129(8), 1922-1939.

Mirza R, Kirchner DB, Dobie RA, Crawford J (2018). "ACOEM Task Force on Occupational Hearing Loss. Occupational Noise-Induced Hearing Loss," *J Occup Environ Med*. 60(9):e498-e501. doi: 10.1097/JOM.0000000000001423.

Dobie RA (2018). "Cost-Effective Hearing Conservation: Regulatory and Research Priorities," *Ear Hear* 39(4):621-630, doi: 10.1097/AUD.0000000000000523.

Hoffman HJ, Dobie RA, Losonczy KG, Themann CL, Flamme GA. (2017). "Declining Prevalence of Hearing Loss in US Adults Aged 20 to 69 Years," *JAMA Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*. 143(3):274-285. doi: 10.1001/jamaoto.2016.3527.

Dobie RA (2017). "Noise," in Wald PH, Stave GM (ed.): *Physical and Biological Hazards of the Workplace*, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken NJ, pp 223 - 230.

Dobie RA and Humes LE. (2017) "Commentary on the regulatory implications of noise-induced cochlear neuropathy," *Int J Audiol*, 2017;56(sup1):74-78. DOI: 10.1080/14992027.2016.1255359.

Ryan AF, Dobie RA, Dubno JR, Lonsbury-Martin BL (2016). "Tinnitus: Research supported by the Tinnitus Research Consortium," *Hear Res*. 334:1. doi: 10.1016/j.heares.2015.12.015.

Dobie RA (2015). *Medical-Legal Evaluation of Hearing Loss*, 3rd ed., Plural Publishing, San Diego, CA.

Dobie RA. (2015). "Is this STS work-related? ISO 1999 predictions as an adjunct to clinical judgment," *Am J Ind Med*. 58(12):1311-8. doi: 10.1002/ajim.22534.

Dobie RA and Wojcik NC. (2015). "Age Correction in Monitoring Audiometry: Method to Update OSHA Age Correction Tables to Include Older Workers," *BMJ Open*. 2015 Jul 13;5(7):e007561. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2014-007561.

Dobie RA. (2014). "Does occupational noise cause asymmetric hearing loss?" *Ear & Hear* 35(5), 577-9. doi: 10.1097/AUD.0000000000000043.

Dobie RA. (2014). "Noise-induced hearing loss," in JT Johnson and CA Rosen (eds.): *Bailey's Head and Neck Surgery-Otolaryngology. 5th ed. Vol 2*, Lippincott-Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia, pp. 2530 - 1541.

Dobie RA and Crawford J. (2014). "Anatomy and physiology of the human ear," in Hutchison TL and Schultz TY (eds.): *Hearing Conservation Manual. 5th edition*, CAOHC, Milwaukee, WI.

Dobie RA and Kopke R. (2014) "Causes and management of hearing disorders," in Hutchison TL and Schultz TY (eds.): *Hearing Conservation Manual. 5th edition*, CAOHC, Milwaukee, WI.

Johnson J and Robinson ST (edited by Dobie RA). (2014) "Hearing Loss," in Ladou J and Harrison R (eds.): *Current Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 5th edition*, McGraw Hill/Lange, New York, NY.

Dobie RA and Clark WW. (2014). "Exchange rates for intermittent and fluctuating occupational noise: A systematic review of studies of human permanent threshold shift," *Ear & Hearing* 35, 86 - 96.

McCunney RJ, Mundt KA, Colby WD, Dobie R, Kaliski K, Blais M. (2014). "Wind turbines and health: A critical review of the scientific literature," *J Occ Envir Med* 56, e108 - 130.