



Finally, to stress how long he actually worked for the university – because bald words do not make it clear – when he was about to retire and he went to the pensions office to arrange his affairs, there was consternation because no records could be found going back as far as he claimed to have contributed. 'Don't worry,' said Hamilton, 'your offices weren't here when I started.'

Rosemary Hickman, *Emeritus Associate Professor of Surgery and leader of the surgical team from 1967 to 1995*

1. From tennis courts to transplants. *Archives of Surgery (Reminiscences)*. 1999; 134: 451-452.

Peter Brain (1922 - 2005)

Peter Brain was born into a very loving extended family. He obtained the MB ChB degree in 1949 at the University of Cape Town. His father, Charles Kimberlin Brain, came to South Africa in 1905 from England as an insect specialist, and became professor of entymology at Stellenbosch University. His mother was Zoe Findlay, eldest child of an unusually gifted family: her grandmother's youngest brother was Eugene Marais, and her father's mother was Katie Schreiner, eldest sister of Olive.

My father was brought up in a rarefied intellectual atmosphere, learning zoology, poetry and philosophy at a very early age from his uncles and grandparents on the veranda of the farm Xanadu, owned by his grandfather, Charles Hudson Lamb Findlay.

My father's strongest memory of his grandfather was of his immense goodness and charity, and this was something that came through to dad as well. He was someone who had no enemies, who never spoke ill of anyone, and was the least petty of men. There was a goodness in him that shone from his eyes, and it is this what I will remember him for. This is not to say, of course, that our father was an angel. Along with his purity of spirit went a certain impatience with the pedestrian affairs of daily life.

He abandoned his career as a GP in favour of further study, and qualified as a specialist pathologist in 1956. After a year or two at the blood bank in East London, we moved to Perth in Australia, where dad was the director of the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service. He held that post until 1965, when the family returned to South Africa and dad started working with the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS), from where he retired. These were very happy years of his life and many of his anecdotes from that time have entered the family mythology. His NBTS colleagues remained close friends throughout his retirement. Even though pathology and blood transfusion affairs were important to him, he also had an enormous range of interests and abilities, and endless energy and inventiveness.

Since he died it has become clear to us just how many people he touched during his life. To list some of his areas of interest:

he made clocks that work, two harpsichords, award-winning black and white photographs. He made all his own lab equipment in Shabani, all the built-in cupboards in the houses where we've lived, did painting, tiling, electrical and repairs of every kind, fixed all our cars, developed a specialist knowledge of acacias, wood carving and turning, and later on a mastery of screen printing and design.

He knew all the stars and all the insects. He knew at least seven languages. At the age of about 40 he began a formal study of Classical Greek, going through the whole array of degrees. His MA on Galen was published by Cambridge University Press, and consisted of the first translations of his writings on blood-letting. He had three doctorates, one in medicine, one in Classical Greek and one based on his published work, which numbered in the hundreds.

He was a witty man with a legendary sense of humour. He loved nonsense verse, which he would quote at great length, revelling in a similar love in any of his children or grandchildren. He never took himself seriously, and was never boring or ponderous. He loved puns and wordplay and was never at a loss for a response.

Dad had a very profound religious life, which was something that meant an immense amount to him. He became a Catholic only after he had been married to my mother for some years, and it was one of the strongest aspects of his life. He was intensely interested in reconciling religion with the new physics and wrote about it later in his life.

Another unalterable love throughout his life was poetry. His memory was prodigious. He could recite from memory as much as anyone had time to listen to, from Homer, in the original; Dante, also in the original, and in his own translation; Chaucer, along with a convincing middle-English accent; Malory, Shakespeare, of course; Milton, Donne, Houseman, Yeats and Eliot, to name only a few. He did not like the moderns in music, literature or anything else much. Our dinner conversation was more often than not poetry. He loved the poetry that transcends, that calls up immortal longings.

Lastly, I have to mention his other great love, my mother. He was deeply in love with her for at least 58 years, and married to her for 56. His love never weakened. Even after 50 years together, he would return in haste from wherever he had been, leaping the stairs to be back with her. His devotion was extraordinary. I have ever seen him impatient with her, or heard them argue. At the end his concern was all for her, for how she would manage without him.

Go in peace, dad.

Phillippa Beckerling, *daughter*