

## Peter J F Baskett

### A pioneer and a personality

Peter John Firth Baskett, BA, MBBCh, BAO, FRCA, FRCP, FFAEM, DipIMC, RCS(Ed), died on 18 April 2008, aged 73.

Peter made an outstanding contribution to medicine. He was a graduate of Cambridge University and Queen's University Belfast, and undertook specialist training in anaesthesia in the United Kingdom.

He spent most of his working life as a consultant anaesthetist in Bristol, at the intensive care units and accident centres at Bristol Royal Infirmary and Frenchay Hospital. He was a major contributor to international groups involved in disaster medicine, and chief medical officer to motor sport and other organisations. He also held senior positions as a medical officer, colonel and advisor to the British Army. He was an author of 137 scientific papers, 28 books and chapters, a number of editorials and films, and the recipient of many awards. He was a past chairman of the editorial board of the journal *Anaesthesia*, and editor-in-chief of *Resuscitation* at the time of his death.

Peter was an extraordinarily talented speaker and committed teacher. After his retirement from clinical practice, he was for many years an instructor and course director for the European Resuscitation Council Advanced Life Support Courses, leading and presenting courses all over Europe. He was a founding member of the European Resuscitation Council, chairman of the cardiopulmonary resuscitation committee of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists and a member of an enormous number of committees related to resuscitation, anaesthesia and training. He was always in great demand as a lecturer and panellist, and one of his great sayings was, "Dear boy, you are only as good as your last lecture".

But it is not for these achievements that we who were privileged to be his close friends remember him. Peter was a committed Anglophile, a lover of all things British, especially sports teams, cars, and his garden. He also had a great love of Australia, although his attitude to our cricketers would be more properly described as "begrudging admiration". I remember, in the wee hours of one morning, Peter telling me with a tear in his eye how pleased he was when Australia did not become a republic.

Peter was always immaculately presented. His appearance helped him get away with things others could not, both in the lecture hall and in my dining room! He had an enjoyable command of language, and was not afraid to deviate from

political correctness. I recollect him describing me as "sartorially challenged" during a citation.

He provided our intensive care unit with a steady stream of advanced trainees in intensive care. A call would come in the middle of the night about a doctor upon whom Peter had chosen to bestow his sponsorship. In these days of human resource departments and complicated interviewing, I often recollect that I never made a bad appointment on the basis of a phone call from Peter. He took great pride in the achievements of the juniors he chose to support.

He was a superb host and guest. A night in some foreign bar solving the world's problems with Peter was always a great experience. If the group was large, he would take charge of "troop movements", and organise the taxis, and visits to the "ablutions block" before entering the next arriving cab.

There are an enormous number of Peter stories that I would like to include in this tribute. Here are two. The UK Motor Sports Association found they were having a number of accidents on the first lap and placed Peter on the back of the grid in a Porsche with a medical pannier. At the end of the second lap he was in the lead.

I remember also a conference in Brussels when, after solving the world's problems into the early hours, he was not, as he would say, "on parade" for our session the following morning. Shortly before the end of the session he arrived. As he was checking out of his hotel, a local citizen had a cardiac arrest in the foyer. Peter performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation and escorted him to hospital. I believe the patient survived.

He is survived by his wife Fiona (often affectionately addressed as Officer Gilroy) and his four children, including his youngest daughter Beatrice, who taught me I was ready to be a grandfather.

To those of us who knew and loved Peter Baskett there is some consolation for the loss in knowing how much pleasure he had in his last years from England winning the Rugby World Cup, and for a short period regaining the Ashes. Whatever happens in the hereafter, I hope we will be in the same place, and I look forward to another drink and conversation together.

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