

Let us all make every effort to enact his programs as part of a sustaining memorial to his commitment to humanitarian medicine, not only through our own individual efforts, but through those of WADEM and through the inclusion of the rest of our physical world, through the Michael Moles Memorial Fellowship, endowing membership support for physicians, nurses, and paramedical personnel from those regions of the globe in which the economic circumstances would otherwise prohibit their participation in our Association.

I invite you to raise your glasses in a memorial tribute to our good friend and, as Leonid Roshal so simply and beautifully put it, a man who "belonged to the world."

## Michael: A Reminiscence

### Malcolm Fisher

A few years ago I was sitting in a bar in Ecuador with Phil. And Phil said to me that one of the best things in medicine was the people you meet. I concurred.

I like charisma in a doctor. Both conservative charisma and larrikin charisma. The last charismatic doctor I spent time with was a retired U.S. burns surgeon. He had a frightening familiarity with the literature matched by his experience and teaching skills. He argued with a twinkle in his eye. I came away smarter and feeling good. There is a charisma shortage in medicine today.

The charismatic doctors I have met are mostly dead, and don't appear replaceable. Where is today's Fred Hollowes?

I cannot remember how many years ago I met Michael. It was in a bar in Hong Kong. I had been taken there to meet him. We drank together. Scotch Whisky. At two o'clock in the morning, he said to me, "You know, I am going to like you, and that is unfortunate because I can tell that you are trouble."

The next night, we wound up in Peter's room with two bottles of Scotch. They were raconteurs of incredible talent. I kept notes on their stories to use in my column, but sadly only one story was legible.

It was the tale of when Michael was in the Guard of Honour for the Queen's visit to Hong Kong. He wore his Sam Browne on the wrong diagonal. After the show was over, he waited in the Officer's mess until he received the summon to the Sargeant's mess where a gleaming RSM sat in solitude.

"Saar," said the RSM. "Today you committed a serious breach of dress regulations in the presence of her Majesty."

"Guilty," replied Michael.

"Saar, it is my understanding that in this situation the officer concerned is to shout the mess of the soldier who brings the breach to his attention, Saar."

"That would seem suitable under the circumstances, Sar-Major," replied Michael.

"Saar, it is also traditional that I should choose the drink, under the circumstances, Saar."

"That would certainly be in order, Sar -Major."

"Very well, saar. Tonight we shall be drinking Drambuie Shandy, Saar."

Michael was encouraged, as he felt sure he could manage a single RSM. "Two Drambuie shandys, please barman."

"One moment sir," said the RSM, and then bellowed, as only a British RSM can, "Squaad."

Through the door marched every Sargeant in Hong Kong. It cost Michael three months pay.

Michael used to turn up. Gaunt and Safari-suited. It was always great to hear his new story. He specialised in those very long and subtle jokes that only the Pommist of

Poms can tell properly.

I saw him in Bangkok. He was the first to point out the error in my abstract in the programme that turned it into a Pommy collectors' item. "Penetrating Trauma in Australia is fortunately rear." He sat in the front row of my lecture in a sea of Asian faces. I was also chairman. There was a very serious Yank talking who, before we started, asked me to invite the crowd to the front at the end as he would intubate his own trachea under local. I invited them and told them that the organising committee members were so impressed they had invited him back next year to talk about rigid sigmoidoscopy. Throughout the session, I was conscious of Michael quietly giggling.

I remember the boat trip on Pittwater when Michael met us at Church Point just before we left. He had needed to bribe the taxi driver to drive very fast. I remember his story about doing a tracheostomy on an automobile squillionaire who was hanging in a tree, and using the offered reward for a scholarship for a trauma fellow. I remember many stories, some of which I heard elsewhere with other heroes or villain. What the hell, if the story was good and well told.

Among the many things Michael Moles taught me was his theory for language for travelers. Although a talented linguist, he believed it was foolish for such as myself to try to learn another language with limited opportunities to practice it. Mike believed one should learn the three key phrases in as many languages as possible. The phrases were:

"How much is that?"

"Can I have another one of those, please?"

"My friend will pay."

He recently agreed with my suggestion that another should be added; "A carafe of the house red wine, please."

Michael was a sailor of great courage and a soldier of great prowess. He left medicine and the world better for his presence.

And he left it short one more charismatic doctor of the larrikin mode. We will not see his like again.

## A True Humanitarian: In Memoriam

**Marvin L. Birnbaum**

Editor-in-Chief

All of us who were touched by this person grieve at our loss—all of us. There are few people that we encounter in our lifetime that leave such an indelible mark upon us as did Michael Moles. Was it the persistent twinkle in his eyes, his dogged safari outfit, his gangling, angular figure, the tone and pacing of his speech, his boyish enthusiasm, or was it his facility with the English language? Or could it have been the agility of his mind, his unwavering dedication and commitment to humanitarian causes, his deep and abiding concern for the human condition, his ability to recognize when he was mistaken and rapidly and sincerely make amends, the scope of his knowledge and experience cloaked deeply in humility, or his skill at flushing out the essence of an issue, and then, articulating it so eloquently? What was it that drew each of us mourning our loss so closely to this character?

This magnetic character somehow got into each of us and became a part of us. Michael even became a part of those of us who only saw or worked with him in very short bursts and at infrequent, widely separated intervals. He dug his way into us and forever has become a part of us. He lives on in us, in all of his students, and in all of those downtrodden he touched in a way to make their lives better. Through them, Michael lives on in the thousands who never had the experience of meeting him or even imagining the impact he had upon their lives.

Michael was a quiet, unassuming leader, a clever (but rarely sneaky!) fellow who never sought self-aggrandisement, who never sought riches, but who oozed love for his fellow human beings. He stood for what was right: insisting that whatever he was associated with was right.

This often ghostly figure has set a standard for our profession. Michael lives on inside of all of us—just look, you will find it, and you will smile for having had him as part of your life. Yes, we have much to celebrate!