

Professor G. M. Carstairs MD, FRCPEd, FRCPsych

Professor G. M. Carstairs is remembered by BASM as its second distinguished Adolphe Abrahams Memorial Lecturer. We are grateful to the Editor of the *British Medical Journal* for kind permission to reproduce below its recent obituary.

Professor Carstairs also achieved great distinction on the

Morris Carstairs was a pioneer social psychiatrist and a distinguished educator. He did important work for the World Health Organization on the psychiatric needs of the Third World, and as president of the World Federation of Mental Health he spread awareness of these needs internationally.

He was born in India, the son of a missionary, and spent his formative first decade there. He trained first in psychiatry in Edinburgh and later as an anthropologist. His fieldwork in poor Indian villages (he received Commonwealth Fund and Rockefeller scholarships) is described in *The Twice Born*. In 1953 he joined the Medical Research Council's Social Psychiatry Unit at the Maudsley Hospital. Aubrey Lewis gave him the opportunity to study how another disadvantaged population, patients with chronic psychosis, might be rehabilitated. With colleagues he showed the importance of motivation and also that the resettlement of patients with schizophrenia could be set back if they returned to an emotionally charged family setting; they often fared better in a neutral environment.

In 1960 Morris was given his own MRC unit for psychiatric epidemiology at University College Hospital, and the next year he took it to Edinburgh when he was appointed to the chair of psychological medicine. He believed in combining epidemiology with clinical study, and the unit became known for its studies of people who took overdoses. He forged extensive links between academics and NHS colleagues and created an important centre for psychiatric research, teaching, and practice such as had not existed outside London. He served on the Royal Commission on Medical Education, seeing to it that students received adequate exposure to psychiatric patients as part of their education.

His Reith lectures, *This Island Now* (1962), excited much interest because he persuasively preached a measure of tolerance, particularly of the behaviour of the young. His suggestion that premarital sexual intercourse was not totally to be condemned generated much controversy. He

track. He was the Scottish 3 miles champion in 1937, 1938 and 1939, including a Championship best of 14 min, 35.8 s in 1937, and he represented Scotland and Great Britain, coming sixth in the European Championships of 1938. He won the silver medal at the World Student games of 1937 and the gold in 1939.

did not shirk controversy and was once not allowed to visit an atomic submarine because in *Who's Who* he had included "Aldermaston marching" among his hobbies.

In 1973 Carstairs was appointed vice chancellor at York, but, alas, the expected opportunity to stimulate and develop the students was not to be. This was the time of student protest. After five uncongenial years he returned to the India he loved, this time under the auspices of WHO, to teach psychiatry, advise on services, and study once again the villages in which he had worked before. This work was subsequently completed in the United States, but when he returned to Britain his long progressive illness began.

Morris Carstairs was a leader, not only in his public attainments but in what he offered personally. He was a brilliant expositor who had the gift of inspiring men and women to develop their ideas to the full and provided the resources for them to do so. Yet he could pungently comment on lazy work or sloppy thinking. He was a skilful administrator who never let it show. Interested in literature and art, he numbered many writers among his friends. He was always generous of himself, his time, and his ideas.

He is survived by his wife, Vera, and their three children.—NK.

George Morrison Carstairs, psychiatrist, anthropologist, humanist, and educator, died 17 April aged 74. Born India, 18 June 1916; educated George Watson's College, Edinburgh University (MB, ChB 1941). Medical officer, Royal Air Force, 1942–6. Member of scientific staff of Medical Research Council 1954–60; professor of psychological medicine at Edinburgh University 1961–73; director of Medical Research Council's Unit for Research on Epidemiological Aspects of Psychiatry 1960–71; vice chancellor of York University 1973–8; subsequently visiting professor in India. BBC Reith lecture 1962. President of World Federation for Mental Health 1967–71.

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