
Obituary



David Monas Leberman, formerly Visiting Professor, Memorial University, Newfoundland, Canada

Known to his family as David but as Monty to his friends, Leberman was a dedicated and eminently successful doctor. But his interests outside medicine ranged so

widely and so deeply that he could justifiably be described as a Renaissance Man.

Monty was urbane, gregarious, a connoisseur of wine and good food, particularly Indian food, a taste for which and an expertise in the preparation thereof, he acquired when serving as a medical specialist in India during the Second World War and later as a WHO specialist in psychiatry at the Institute of Mental Health in Bangalore. His cultural concerns ranged from a lifelong devotion to the theatre, to literature and especially to poetry, as witness his regular attendance, geography permitting, at meetings of the Epsom Poetry Group, which defied its parochial title and boasted among its members such distinguished literati as John Tessimond, Philip Oakes and Hubert Nicholson. He was, incidentally, an elegant speaker of verse helped as he was by a mellifluous voice which, despite his exposure to the gentrifying influence of decades of living in the south, retained to the end overtones of a Yorkshire accent. At the other extreme, mention must be made of his passion for fishing, especially fly-fishing.

Monty was born on 7 October 1912 into a highly-respected Jewish family in Hull, although he himself was irreligious. He was educated at Hymer's College in that city and studied medicine at Leeds where he was an outstanding student. He was one of a tiny elite chosen annually on the results of the 2nd MB examinations to read for an Hons BSc (Physiology) degree which he duly obtained in 1933. In 1936 he both graduated MB, ChB (Leeds) and passed the MRCS (England), LRCP (London). He was awarded the MD (Leeds) in 1939 and elected MRCP (London) in 1940, proceeding to the FRCP in 1971. In 1951 he passed the DPM

(Conjoint), and was elected FRCP (Canada) in 1976 and FRCPsych in 1972.

He received his early postgraduate clinical experience at the Bradford Royal Infirmary, Walsall General Infirmary and the Royal Infirmary Newcastle upon Tyne where he served as Medical Registrar and Clinical Tutor. In 1941 he was commissioned in the Royal Army Medical Corps and as a graded medical specialist, saw service in the UK and in India where he rose to the rank of major. After demobilisation in 1946 he was appointed post-war registrar grade III at the Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith.

In 1948 he decided on a career in psychiatry, and to this end he served as registrar, and later, senior registrar at the Maudsley Hospital. He was appointed consultant to Bexley Hospital and Greenwich District Hospital in 1951, posts he held, apart from service from 1957–1959 in India under the auspices of WHO, until he retired from the NHS in 1976. His career took on a new lease of life when in that year he was elected Visiting Professor in Psychiatry at the Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, an academic distinction which those who knew him regarded as the fulfilment of his destiny. He retired, aged 71, in 1983, after seven years of doing what he enjoyed most – teaching.

David Leberman held several important administrative positions in the Bexley Hospital Group and was in turn secretary, and then chairman, of the SE Division of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association. He was a member of many learned societies and the author of innumerable scientific papers mainly concerned with electroencephalography and psychopharmacology.

On his return from Canada he chose, rather surprisingly, to live a somewhat secluded life in rural Norfolk. His health slowly deteriorated: his penchant for the delights of the table had taken their toll, evidence of which was all too readily visible in his ever-increasing girth which in later life gave him a distinctly Pickwickian profile. But his intellectual curiosity remained as acute as ever. As his son, Paul, a surgeon in Glasgow, put it, "What came next kept him going". He died on 24 July 1996, aged 83.

In 1940, David Leberman married Lucy Helen Stone. She survives him together with two sons, a daughter, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. One son predeceased him.

HENRY R. ROLLIN