

BENN ALTON POMRYN, formerly Consultant Psychiatrist, Littlemore Hospital, Oxford.

Dr B. A. Pomryn died on 29 October 1982, aged 69.

Qualifying at the Westminster Hospital in 1939, his early medical experience was soon interrupted by joining the RAF where he served as a general medical duties officer until demobbed in 1946. It was from that time onwards that he was involved in the practice of psychiatry, participating in the Social Rehabilitation Unit at Belmont Hospital with Maxwell Jones for 11 fruitful years, contributing to books describing the pioneering work and resulting in the publication of *A Study of Therapeutic Communities* in 1952 and *Community as Doctor*. During this time he also had links as a clinical assistant in the psychiatric departments at Westminster and Hammersmith Hospitals. Maxwell Jones, who worked closely with him, wrote of Pom's intense identification with his patients and his unusual perceptiveness. He credited him with most of the evolutionary changes associated with the first therapeutic community that started in 1947, and said that he was one of the first psychiatrists who realized the need to see the patient in his social context. In the early '50s he met daily with twenty or more patients when large group treatment was almost unknown and encouraged family members to join these groups, opening the eye of the staff to the limitations of individual psychotherapy.

In 1957 he was appointed as Consultant Psychiatrist at Broadgate Hospital, Beverley in Yorkshire, where he remained until he took up his last post at Littlemore Hospital in Oxford. There he made extremely useful contributions to the work of the therapeutic community on the Phoenix Unit and developed a style of his own with general practitioners, spending much time in helping them deal with the emotional interaction between patient and doctor and its relevance in the understanding of dynamic inter-relationships and symptom formation.

Benn Pomryn was a quiet, unassuming, gentle and unobtrusive person, who was dearly loved by his patients, many family doctors and close colleagues. He never felt the need of an office, bringing his services to the patient in the ward or to the general practitioner in the health centre or the patient in the community. His help and support in the early changes and reorganization at Littlemore Hospital were deeply appreciated.

BMM

MELITTA R. SCHMIDEBERG, retired, 199 Gloucester Place, Regent's Park, London W1.

Melitta Schmeideberg, a Foundation Fellow of the College, was the daughter of Melanie Klein and was married to Walter Schmeideberg, an analyst and personal friend of Sigmund Freud. From her earliest years she was immersed

in the psychoanalytic movement, and she obtained her MD at Berlin University in order to become an analyst.

In the early 1930s the Schmeidebergs moved to London, where they both became members of the British Psychoanalytic Society, but the endless theoretical discussions in the British Psycho-Analytic Society and the feuds between the dogmatic assertions of the Kleinians and the Freudians eventually decided her to resign her membership of both the British Society and of the International Psycho-Analytic Association.

Some time before the war she had become involved in the work of the Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency (ISTD). However, in treating young delinquents, she became convinced that in offender therapy, psychoanalysis was a highly unsuitable weapon of treatment, focusing as it does on the subconscious and on childhood trauma rather than on the immediate problems facing the delinquent.

She went to America in 1945 and spent most of her time there until 1961. In 1950 she founded, with a group of other psychiatrists and social workers, The Association for the Psychiatric Treatment of Offenders (APTO) in New York on the lines of the ISTD, and became Director of Clinical Services for the Association. She was medical adviser to the Board of Correction of New York City from 1958 to 1961, and Official Delegate for the American Psychiatric Association to the UN Conference on Juvenile Delinquency in London in 1959. She was the author of over 100 scientific papers and of *Children in Need*, published in 1949; in 1957 she founded the *APTO Journal*—now *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. She returned to Europe in 1961, staying in retirement for a few years, during which time she had thought through all the theories of psychoanalysis and came to the conclusion that none of the theories of the subconscious could be substantiated and that psychoanalysis was harmful for both the patient and the analyst. 'The psychoanalytic situation is an abnormal one and necessarily abnormalizes. The constant dwelling on painful pathological and irrational aspects, the minimizing and undermining of rational thinking and objective achievement, the attacks on social values and the isolation of the patient from ordinary people can only be harmful and warp the personality.' She had felt from her early years that reassurance was an important part of treatment; she now came to adapt her therapeutic approach to offenders to ordinary patients and found that they benefited even more from a caring attitude and an attempt at problem solving. Empathy between therapist and patient was essential, and she herself demonstrated this most clearly. She always had time for lengthy telephone calls with patients (frequently at her own expense), and while sometimes impatient with friends and acquaintances, she could always find the time, interest and energy to help those in need of psychiatric counselling.

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