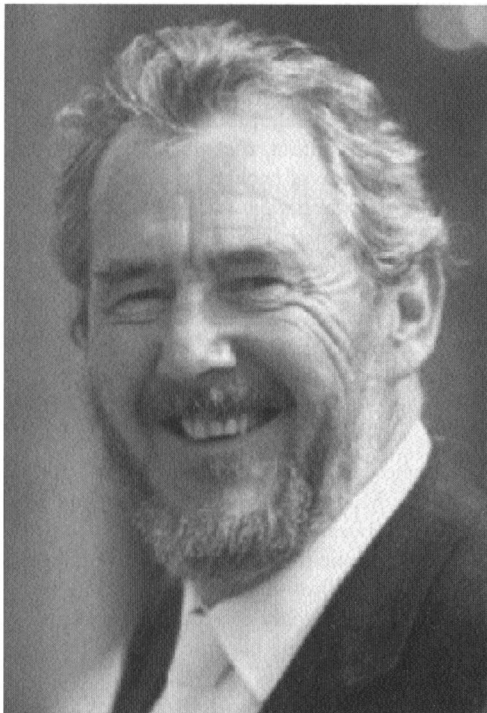


T. Michael Moles: A Life to be Celebrated

Peter Baskett and Judith Fisher



T. Michael Moles
1934 - 2001

Behold a bearded, mandarin-like figure, resplendent in a khaki safari suit. This ethereal figure was present at almost every meeting or congress dealing Disaster, Emergency, or Trauma Medicine anywhere in the world. But, this was no ordinary mandarin—this was one of the most intelligent, humorous, and charismatic persons in the world. This was Mike Moles. Mike died at home in Hong Kong on the 20th March 2001, age 66 years.

Son of a medical Knight of the Realm of Irish stock, Mike was schooled in India, Egypt, the Sudan, and the United Kingdom. His school career was distinguished by awards of prizes, receipt of scholarships, leadership, and achievements in sporting, notably in field hockey and shooting. He matriculated to medical school at the St. Thomas Hospital in London, qualifying in 1958. After holding house officer posts in St. Thomas Hospital, he embarked on a career in anaesthesia, training at Southampton and other major teaching and specialist hospitals in London. During his specialty training, he devoted five years to military service with the Royal Army Medical Corps, serving with the renowned Gurkha Parachute Squadron in Borneo and Nepal, the Parachute Field Ambulance, and the British Military Hospital in Hong Kong.

Mike's military service had a profound effect upon his career. He developed an interest in trauma, mass-casualty management, anti-terrorism, chemical and biological warfare agents, and humanitarian aid that lasted throughout the remainder of his professional life.

After completing his regular military service, Mike continued to work with the Reserve Forces during which time he acquired expertise with the Special Services. His skills and experience subsequently led to him being a sought-after consultant to field surgical teams, training establishments, anti-terrorist medical intervention centres, and mine-clearing projects in the Middle East and throughout South East Asia. Mike was a hands-on person, always in the vanguard, leading from the front, as was his wont.

Mike's civilian career also flourished. He was appointed consultant in anaesthesia, trauma, and intensive care at Southampton in 1970. During this time, he created a major incident response plan that was to become a blueprint for many hospitals in the United Kingdom (UK) and abroad. He was a founding member of the British Association for Immediate Care, and it was Mike who named the Association, and coined the term BASICS,

which has persisted for some 30 years.

Mike also played a key role in the development of the World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine (WADEM), and had continued to work tirelessly for WADEM up to the time of his death. He held the vision that there was a need for co-ordinating the activities of disaster medicine organisations world-wide. At the time of his death, Mike was completing a redraft of the WADEM bylaws that could facilitate the development of the structure to achieve this dream.

Mike played a major role in organising the 1985 World Congress for Disaster and Emergency Medicine in Brighton, and was Chairman of the highly successful World Congress in Hong Kong in 1989. He attended and contributed to every World Congress of the WADEM (Club of Mainz), since its inception. Michael was appointed First Vice President of WADEM in 1997.

Mike also was a founding member of the International Trauma Anaesthesia and Critical Society (ITACCS) in 1988, and contributed to every annual Congress since. He was a member of the Executive Committee of ITACCS from the beginning, and was the Chair of the International Co-ordination Committee and Liaison with the United Nations.

In 1980, Mike moved to Hong Kong to take up the post of Reader in Anaesthesia at Hong Kong University. He was the senior academic in the speciality at the time at the University. In his clinical work, Mike specialised in the care of victims of trauma and of patients undergoing major maxillo-facial surgery. He was expert in the management of difficult airway problems. This expertise led him into international work in trauma and mass casualty management.

Mike soon became a recognised leader in the anaesthetic circles of Hong Kong, and was a leading light in the Society of Anaesthetists of Hong Kong. Because of the vast number of his international friends and contacts, and his astute networking talents, Mike succeeded in bringing the most distinguished lecturers to the island.

Mike had extraordinary leadership and administrative skills. He possessed impressive powers of persuasion and diplomacy. Mike was excellent at wielding these tools, which led to him being sought when such skills were required. As an example, use of these skills led to the formation of the Hong Kong College of Anaesthetists, and he became the first President of this most successful organisation. He held executive positions in more than 20 learned societies. In addition, he was awarded four Honorary Memberships of professional societies in China, Japan, and the UK.

Michael retired from clinical anaesthetic practice in 1995, but was appointed Honorary Reader to the

University of Hong Kong in recognition of his very distinguished service. He continued to undertake aeromedical repatriation trips until the time of his death.

Mike wrote prolifically with over 30 books and publications in peer reviewed journals and edited six books of Congress abstracts. His forte, however, was the spoken word; and he delivered more than 100 learned addresses to societies and organisations all over the world. He had a unique style of delivery, body language, humour, pathos, and a rich baritone voice—he was masterful. His gift for lateral thinking made him an innovator, and after listening to him, many have returned home with their batteries recharged and enthusiasm rekindled.

Mike Moles was marvellous company—a brilliant raconteur and mimic without equal. In the Foreign Correspondents Club in Hong Kong, he would regale eminent, experienced journalists with stories. He had a finger on the pulse of the medical, military, financial, and general political scenes throughout the world. His stories were painted with a rich hue of background details.

His private life was happy. His long-time partner, Pat Elliott Shircore, saw to that. She is an excellent designer, and Mike helped with many of her projects. Together, their joint ingenuity had a catalytic effect that resulted in some quite stunning, unique creations. As with all geniuses, Mike was a wonderfully exciting and mercurial character to live with. No one knew Mike better than Pat. She was sensitive to his mood, and supportive and stimulating as was needed. They lived in a small village at the easterly tip of Hong Kong where the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea roll ashore. Mike's passion was sailing, and he was a veteran of many ocean races including the South China Sea event, which is one of the most demanding races in the world. He would lead house guests to the promontory, and wax eloquently and excitedly about the sea and his exploits upon it. One could not help become infected by his boyish enthusiasm.

Mike Moles is survived by his first wife Shirley and their four children: Mandy, Rory, Jono, and Lucy. Mike loved his children dearly, and was inordinately proud of them, and was delighted with his grandchild, Freya.

By all accounts, Mike's death was as dramatic as was his life. While at home, he developed pain in his neck and chest. Over a few minutes, the pain descended to his abdomen and legs. Mike knew what was happening, and explained to Pat exactly what a ruptured dissecting aneurysm was, and what it meant. A gentleman to the end, he apologised as he died in her arms. A short, but very moving cremation ceremony was held at the top of the cliff overlooking the South China Sea. His ashes are scattered in the ocean. That was what he wanted.

We all miss him....