

Appreciations

Dr Brian Jegasothy

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Dr Brian Jegasothy, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Dermatology, University of Pittsburgh passed away on 20th April 2001 after a prolonged illness. He was 58 years old at the time of his death.

Brian was born in Colombo and had his early education at Wesley College. He entered the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya in its first batch where he had a brilliant academic record. He was one of the popular members of the batch. He met Ranee, a batchmate when both were employed at the Central Bank while waiting to enter the medical faculty. The love affair blossomed during medical school days and they were married soon after. The Jegasothys moved to the United States of America in 1970 and Brian had his first appointment in Internal Medicine at the Coney Island Hospital in New York. He performed so well during the training period at Coney Island and obtained excellent recommendations that he was accepted at Yale for his residency. He remained in Yale for 5 years becoming the chief resident and an immunology fellow for Dr Byron Waksman. In 1976 he moved to Duke University where he was recognised as an excellent clinician, a favourite teacher and a thorough researcher. He later became the head of dermatology at Durban Veterans Administration Medical Centre. In 1982 he moved to the University of Pennsylvania as full professor and vice chairman. In 1987 he accepted the Chairmanship of the Department of Dermatology at the University of Pittsburgh and remained in that post until his illness forced him to retire in 1999.

Brian's achievements were many. He not only rose up in his career but became internationally known and accepted as a brilliant researcher. He authored more than 300 scientific papers and 2 books. He served on numerous editorial boards and lectured in many parts of the world. His research interests were on immunologic mechanisms of skin diseases. He was the

leading researcher in the extra-corporal photopheresis for mycosis fungoides, scleroderma and pemphigus. He and his colleagues did the pioneering studies on preparations of tacrolimus.

In spite of all these achievements he was humble and humane and remained a true friend of the Sri Lankan community Pittsburgh. He was a religious man and during the last few years of his life he founded the Asian Indian Christian Church in Pittsburgh. The last occasion I met Brian was when I invited him to a private function in Cleveland, USA. Ranee and Brian took a flight to be with us on that day. Although he was ill with bladder cancer he had the most enjoyable time with the Sri Lankan crowd and was seen singing and dancing the baila as he did in medical school. In 1996 Brian delivered the Congress lecture at the 3rd International Medical Congress organised by the Peradeniya Medical School Alumni Association. He visited the dermatology unit in Colombo and was genuinely interested in taking on trainees in dermatology from Sri Lanka.

Although he lived and worked for long years in the US becoming a world renowned dermatologist and an eminent researcher, he remained a true Sri Lankan at heart. His ashes were brought to Sri Lanka and were interred on an estate close to Kandy, a place he loved very much. His ever loving wife Ranee lives in the USA, their daughter Manjula is a dermatologist in Miami and their son Manoj is an attorney at law in Pittsburgh.

At his death his caring family, his many patients, his friends in Pittsburgh and Sri Lanka felt a void which can never be filled. It is a rare privilege to have had a unique person like Brian as a dear friend.

W D H Perera
Colombo.