

A tribute from Dr Nick Chandler, former student at Guy's Dental School, now in Dunedin, New Zealand

I first encountered Tom in September 1976 when allocated to his Preclinical Class at Guy's Hospital; he was to teach us the rudiments of Operative Dentistry. We were told that some of us 'would shine like 60 Watt bulbs, and some like 100 Watt bulbs. Tooth morphology was taught with coloured waxes; I showed him my wax premolar 14 times before he 'passed' it; the group was counting, and we soon realized that amongst our teachers this man was never particularly easy to please. We found out later when carving large amalgam restorations that he had been right to push us hard.

Tom was intensely practical. Our undergraduate group was invited to a building near Watford which he had turned into a surgery for his part-time work. He had done all the cabinetry, the plumbing, the electrics, all those things we would now ask a specialist installer to do, by himself. Not long after that Tom the builder was in action again, this time on major renovations to a house at Elephant and Castle in London; further evidence of his energy, practical mind and attention to detail. If someone could do the job themselves, then they were encouraged to do so. My most stressful Pitt Ford memory is of being the photographer at his wedding to Heather in Loughborough Parish Church. No professional was engaged, and I had never taken wedding photographs before. Tom seemed happy with the result; luckily he never saw the batteries falling out of the flashgun and rolling away under several pews during the service, with his guests scrabbling on the floor to pick them up and pass them back.

Time was never wasted. On trains, a laptop appeared and papers were written or textbooks edited. During his visit to New Zealand, he was observed studying the nutritional information on a bag of apples. When asked, he declared this to be more interesting than our local newspaper!! Here, I discovered his knowledge of fine wines and classical music, and noted how he continued working when most people that far from home would have been out of sight and on vacation.

With his smart suits and immaculate shirts (pure cotton of course) one might think that Tom kept a

classic Bentley somewhere in the Consultant's car park. The truth was that his preferred mode of transport was a Bickerton folding bicycle, which somehow found a place parked in ready-to-ride form in his tiny office on the 27th floor of the Guy's Tower. Here, with only elbow room, coffee was brewed (fresh of course) or tea served in china cups. Under a metre away on the shelf were the jaws of various species in plastic pots being demineralized. The importance of research to him was everywhere around. Perhaps any unusual tastes in our beverages was spilt EDTA?



Tom at Queenstown, New Zealand 1997.

Tom took the ultimate risk by having several PhD students carry out their research and write their theses overseas through the University of London's External Programme. The same care and attention to detail spanned thousands of kilometres; an e-mail pointing out that I had hit the space bar twice between two words says it all. As a supervisor and in many other roles he invented his own brand and level of academic rigour. Nothing was missed, and if something was promised on a certain day and time, then it certainly happened. I have a Christmas card signed 'Ruthless', sent when a particular deadline was to be met during what I imagined were the holidays.

Despite his incredible busyness, Tom was very generous with his time and shared the good and bad things with those around him; he had phenomenal patience when the going got tough. He will be greatly

missed, but he lives on in those who came in contact with him; most will be shining several Watts brighter than before as a direct result of his company and his mentorship.

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