



Duncan Curr

It is with deep regret that I announce the death of Duncan Curr who died on February 9th following a car accident in South Africa. He was 31. Duncan came to St Mary's in 1980. He will probably be best remembered for his place in the Quadriceps barbershop quartet. This unlikely group entertained us at many Mary's events including the Soiree. It is to the group's credit that close harmony was so well received at these events - not the usual choice of entertainment for your average front-row forward. I am sure what helped was the numerous and humorous changes to the words of the songs often on subjects best suited to a merry medical audience. Duncan also produced the opera 'The Boyfriend'. This was a happy change from the usual Gilbert and Sullivan. It was a little incongruous seeing his slight, bespectacled figure with an overwhelming moustache keeping order with the baton. Duncan wasn't a traditional-style conductor - more a benign dictator who could jolly people into producing a good performance. It was a success.

Duncan had a life-long passion for bicycles and on one occasion cycled across London on a tandem to the Summer Ball. Both he and his partner were in full evening dress.

After qualifying in 1985 Duncan went on to do the Mary's GP scheme. He was always surprised that he had been given

that job, not least because he had been sporting a very un-doctorlike haircut for the Dean's interview. This was probably partly Mimi's influence. She was his companion from 1986 and at that time had extended her artistic talents to Duncan's head. Duncan emerged from his GP training with the DCH, DRCOG and the MRCGP. He was soon to add letters DTM&H to this list. He had always been interested in tropical medicine and didn't feel ready to go straight into general practice. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine was the obvious place to spend four months in preparation for a spell overseas. The course provided a good meeting place for like-minded people as well as learning the practical skills needed for tropical, clinical and laboratory work. Duncan's superb and witty speech at the end of the course dinner is remembered with affection. It is typical of his modesty that his parents only found out about his very high DTMH exam results after his death. His life always retained a certain endearing boyish youthfulness and mild eccentricity. Duncan's lifestyle was a sort of prolongation of that as a student. You still had to climb over bicycles to get into his flat and then over piles of books once inside. He wasn't interested in material possessions.

In the summer of 1992 Duncan and Mimi left to work at Mosvold Hospital, Kwazulu, South Africa. Readers of the BMJ 'Soundings' column will remember his excellent contributions about life in Mosvold. The stories were often humorous and emphasised human dignity and frailty in a difficult environment.

Duncan knew that going overseas wasn't going to be easy. The separation from family and friends was hard and there were new dangers to face, but he did it anyway. Duncan did what he believed in, and followed his heart. A stay-at-home, safe, conventional Duncan would have been a lesser man. His joy at doing something different and worthwhile helped to fulfil his dreams. It is numbing that one so full of life and with so much to do has gone. We give our sincere sympathy to Mimi and his parents.

PW.

A Memorial Fund has been set up to help send Mary's medical students on their electives to Africa. Donations are very welcome. They can be sent to the Duncan Curr memorial Trust, c/o Philip Blissett, St Mary's Hospital Medical School, Norfolk Place, Paddington, London W2 1PG.