

## OBITUARY

### DR ANTHONY PETER JOSEPH, 1937–24

Anthony Peter Joseph was born in Birmingham shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, and he recalled watching anti-aircraft fire during the Blitz as perhaps his earliest memory; in his infant eyes the nights provided firework displays like no other, though he later acknowledged that his parents probably felt very differently!

Educated as a boarder at Abbotsholme school, Anthony evidently demonstrated intellectual aptitude, coupled with an industrious streak for pursuing the unusual. A classmate recalls him convincing the teachers to retrieve a drowned sheep from a nearby river and allow its dissection in the biology labs, while his brother remembers he established a workforce to improve the quality of the school's toilets.

With such an interest in anatomy and public health, it was surely no surprise that he went on to read Medicine at Trinity College, Cambridge, graduating in 1961, then subsequently entering General Practice. A short period of work in London followed, before a foray to Australia where he continued his medical training for several years, specialising in both obstetrics and paediatrics. On his return to Birmingham in 1968, he joined a practice in Smethwick where he remained for over thirty years. At the turn of the century, Anthony took 'semi-retirement' which resulted in his actually working more hours than before, to the surprise of very few. On top of general locum work, he branched into helping the homeless population of central London, continuing in this fashion until his formal retirement at the age of 84.

It would be impossible to write about Anthony Joseph without mentioning family trees, the research of which captivated him from a very young age, and for which he developed something of a passion, dare we say obsession. Indeed, a close friend reports he once observed that, 'Medicine is my hobby, and Genealogy is my profession'. It is probably for the best that he did not share this information with his patients, lest they worry his loyalty to the record books took priority! A microfiche reader was a household fixture in much the same way

others might have had a microwave, and doubtless Dad got more use and enjoyment from it too. No familial connection was too obscure, no relationship or history too challenging to uncover, and it is not hyperbole to say his international reputation in the field was legendary, with memberships of, or presidential appointments to, groups as far afield as the United States and Australia. When not stalking graveyards for their hidden secrets, Anthony was an ardent supporter and former president of the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society, further testament to his mental fortitude and tenacity for analysing data, though it should be noted even he had his limits, being incapable of understanding any problem concerning a computer.

It would be remiss not to mention him in his capacity as a father (or grandfather!), given the size of the extended family for which he is responsible, and the care he showed for all of his descendants. He took an interest in everyone's pursuits, and shared their achievements with anyone who would listen. Patients frequently remarked that he gave his time freely, and actively listened to their concerns, something which those close to him already knew as fact. An incredibly generous man to all around him, his capacity for helping others was equally true at home as at work.

To condense such a lifetime of achievements and capability into a few short words is naturally to omit much of the man he was. Suffice to say, Anthony was irreplaceable and unique, and the positive touch he left on those he met will long be remembered.

Anthony is survived by his five children, and ten grandchildren, all of whom will miss him deeply.

Harry Joseph

#### **Note from Helen Bersten**

As the AJHS Corresponding Member for Great Britain from 1967 to the present time, Anthony was a prodigious correspondent, writing regularly to long-time secretary Louise Rosenberg until her death in 2018. Many of these letters are preserved in the AJHS archives. In recent years he was described as the 'United Kingdom Representative'. He had followed in the footsteps of the great Cecil Roth. Anthony contributed to our *Newsletter* in 1968–69, 1986–88 and 1995–96 as well as having articles published in our *Journal* in 1964, 1969, 1974 and 1997. Whenever he visited these shores, he always gave a fascinating lecture

on some genealogical puzzle, and he became a personal friend of many in the Society.

He will be missed by both the Australian Jewish Historical Society and The Australian Jewish Genealogical Society (which recently combined) for his scholarship and his friendship.

May his memory be a blessing.