

## Cradle Memories of SGH\*

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Our orientation lecture, freshies  
At the Pathology Lecture Theatre in SGH  
Professor of Medicine, Gordon Arthur Ransome  
Addressing his new batch of medical embryos  
Speaking impressively  
He told us, what he expected;  
Regaling us with stories of Sir William Osler,  
How we should emulate Somerset Maugham,  
Because of his medical training  
Able to write vivid tales of human passion

Because doctors were privileged  
To study and to understand  
Human nature in its raw.  
He exhorted us to become keen detectives  
Like Sherlock Holmes,  
To acquire excellent clinical acumen  
To arrive at an accurate diagnosis,  
The hallmark of good medicine

The Anatomy Professor, R Kanagasunthiram, brilliant mind  
Always wearing unkempt off white medical overall  
Smelling of formalin and cadaverine  
A veteran of Gray's Anatomy  
Where he was oft quoted  
When he first appeared in class  
Adjusting the standing microphone

We mistook him for the attendant  
Until he commenced to draw  
Colourful anatomy plates on the blackboard;  
If he catches you sleeping during tutorial  
He would quietly pat you  
On the back and say, "Come here my friend"

I well recall our Social Medicine classes  
The lecturer, a towering Ang Moh  
With a beard like Burl Ives, equally handsome  
Would place his chair on top of the table  
And there sit, peering down upon us

To ensure we pay attention,  
Half the time we were focused  
On his jokes rather than his lessons,  
And when end of term test came  
Half the class failed

We were taught Neurophysiology  
By none other than the deputy PM  
Out first lecture, a truculent guy  
With a short fuse to his temperament  
In full PAP white  
Stood on a high stool  
So he could reach and project his slides  
All muddled up by his assistant.

Throughout the lecture  
He maintained a repetitive rebuke  
On his quivering assistant  
Glaring at him but managed  
To deliver a didactic lecture  
On the electrophysiological  
Impulse of the somatic nerve.

If you are posted to Surgery B Unit  
To Mr Yahya Cohen's Unit  
And you are rostered to assist him in OT  
You know you had it.  
For any slight mistake  
You get rapped on the knuckles  
With his stainless steel retractor.

On the occasion I was to assist him  
At the Operation Theatre, he asked me  
Young man, what do you think  
Of our Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew?  
I was taken aback  
Such a tricky question;  
And for what seemed a long pause  
Before I blurted out the answer  
He is a great man, I said

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\*An abridged version. The original full length is published at the Singapore General Hospital's intranet.

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Why? he asked me,  
An even longer pause before my answer,  
He cried for his country.  
I watch him last night on TV  
He stopped his operation,  
Looked at me, I cringed,  
Then I could detect the smile  
In his eyes above his mask  
His answer, one word, Good.

One of the most beloved  
Among all our clinical teachers  
Was the Professor of Medicine  
Professor Gorden Arthur Ransome  
You always look forward  
To his bedside tutorials  
So interesting and much to learn  
He was known as GAR  
To his friends and colleagues  
For us, he was simply Prof

Fortunately for me  
I was in his tutorial group  
With personal teaching from him  
You learn more from him  
By observing his methods;  
The way he goes about  
Taking a history from the patient,  
Eliciting physical signs.

His clinical acumen was unsurpassed  
He was a kind and patient teacher  
He communicated so well even without speaking  
An Englishman who did not speak dialect  
But through his eyes, his smile  
And body language,  
His patients understood,  
In return, they smile or cry,  
Pour out their woes to him.  
He in turn, touches their pain  
Comforts, leaves them to heal.  
Often he would find my physical signs  
And my diagnosis at fault  
He would proceed to show us  
His approach to the problem  
And where we went wrong.

A young boy with jaundice and hepatitis  
He asked if liver punch was positive  
I confessed I did not know,  
He gave a hard thump  
Over the boy's abdomen  
The boy cried like an aeroplane at take off  
GAR smiled and said it's a sham.  
We were so upset,  
For the boy was crying  
And GAR was smiling.  
How cruel, I thought.  
How do you know it's a sham? we asked GAR  
Why? There are no tears in his eyes,  
He cried from hurt dignity.  
GAR tickled the boy's toes  
With a coloured feather  
The boy burst out, shrieking delight  
Tears of joy down both cheeks.

Professor Sir Gorden Arthur Ransome  
Embodies all the wholesome goodness of Medicine;  
Beneath his warm and candid smile  
Satiated with good wine and pigeon brand cigarettes  
His whole physical being, his heart, his mind, his soul  
Brim with all the core values and greatness  
Of an astute, dedicated and noble physician.

His legacy lives on among his countless  
Students, his medical embryos, disciples,  
All those who have been taught by him  
And have passed through  
The portals of SGH under his tutelage.

Indeed the hands of Prof Ransome  
Had truly rocked that first Cradle of Medicine.  
He was the beginning but not the end  
As he had fashioned us, his embryos.  
His benevolent smile and kindly disposition  
Will live forever in our memories;  
As we walk in his footsteps  
Tracing footprints of his medical RNA.

SGH 195<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
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