

Emeritus Professor Sir Datuk Gordon Arthur Ransome (1910—1978)— The Man I Knew

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Much has been written and spoken in tribute to Sir Gordon Arthur Ransome (G.A. R. to those who know him well) ; none of these have done adequate justice to the greatness of this Man. My tribute here would befall the same fate. Nevertheless, I shall try to pay tribute to G.A.R. -a tribute to the man I knew.

G.A.R. was a humble man. He treated his students and junior staff as his equal. He talked and lectured to his students often as if they were his equal ; I never fully appreciate his greatness when I was his student.

G.A.R. was a magnanimous man who bore no ill-will towards anyone. When I first applied to join the University Department of Medicine, he did not know me and he had already decided on the man he wanted. Due to my application, the man he wanted and myself were appointed after six months' delay. Although he grumbled to me about this, he bore no ill-will and I got on marvellously well with him right from the beginning.

Although G.A. R. had a handsome and serious appearance he was also witty. Above all he was a very generous man. The saga of the building of Mistri Wing in Singapore General Hospital illustrates the wit and generosity that was so typical of G.A.R. In the early fifties, the late Mr. N.R. Mistri was admitted to Medical Unit I in Norris Block under the care of G.A.R. Mr. Mistri had noticed how old and delapidated the buildings of MU I were; he asked G.A.R. how much it would cost to rebuild MU I. Of course, G.A.R. did not know and he thought that Mr. Mistri was just joking; G.A.R. replied jokingly that it would cost \$1 ,000,000. The following week, Mr. Mistri sent a cheque for \$950,000; the money was to be used by G.A.R. in any way he saw fit. At that time, there was a need to build a children's wing and when G.A.R. was approached, he gave away all the \$950,000 to the building of Mistri Wing! I doubt in the annals of medical history in Singapore, there exists a more generous doctor. This story, sad to say, ends with an ironic twist; I know it is true because G.A.R. told me several times about it : when Mistri Wing was officially opened, G.A.R. was not invited!

The clinical acumen of G.A.R. has been widely acclaimed. By the bedside, his skill of elicitation of physical signs has never been equalled or surpassed. He was a Master in the art of examining the patient and he was so good at it because he truly enjoyed doing it. He often returned to examine a patient repeatedly because he had overlooked a physical sign; he continued to practise this right to the time he retired.

If ever there was a truly honest doctor, G.A.R. was one. Whenever he missed a diagnosis, he would openly admit it to his staff (junior and senior alike). Whatever that he did not know, he never tried to hide or bluff; like a true great man, he would confess that he did not know. In an age clouded by much dishonesty and deceit, his honesty shone like a bright beacon.

The sufferings of the patients always touched G.A.R. He frequently gave thoughtful presents (such as cigarettes to the smokers) to the patients at his personal expense. He treated all patients, kings or peasants alike. He gave them his best and at all times.

G.A.R. practised medicine to as close to The Hippocratic Oath as any doctor can hope to do. Gordon Arthur Ransome has left a legacy of excellence in the practice of medicine that will be remembered as long as the practice of medicine continues.