

Oration Delivered by Prof. Jannie Louw at the Memorial Service For Professor B. Bromilow-Downing

Friends, allow me a few minutes to pay tribute on behalf of all of us to a greatly respected friend and colleague and one of South Africa's most distinguished medical men — Professor Bromilow-Downing — Brom as he was fondly known by everybody. He occupied with distinction the posts of *Dean of the Medical Faculty* and *Professor of Medical Education* at the University of Cape Town for 20 years — from 1958 to 1977.

And firstly, I would like to say how fortunate we were to have had as our *leader* — often in difficult times — a man of such high principles and absolute integrity. His strict *selection* of medical students according to the rules, his *respect* for protocol, his *tremendous efforts* at gaining better recognition and improved status for the professions allied to medicine (formerly known as paramedicals), his *concern* for all students, and his *wise counsel* to, and co-operation with colleagues are remembered by many. Then there were his contributions to the *growth of our faculty* — the role he played in the expansion of the medical school and teaching hospitals and in designing the *new curriculum* — to mention but two. Whatever he did was done with dedication and singleness of purpose.

But Brom was a man of many parts and a born leader. Those of us who knew him for a long time recognised that he did a great deal outside his normal duties and that whatever he did was for the sake of his fellowmen.

Long ago during his student years in the late 1920's and early 1930's, he had already exhibited his remarkable qualities of leadership. He was a member of the Men's Residence House Committee, convener of the Hospital Rag, and cheerleader at intervarsity.

During World War II he was second in command of the 17th Field Ambulance in the Western Desert until taken a prisoner of war at Tobruk in 1942. In the prisoner of war camp in Germany, "the Major" as he is still fondly remembered, became greatly respected and loved for keeping up the morale of the troops, especially during a horrendous 700 mile forced march. He was mentioned in dispatches for services rendered to Allied prisoners of war and he was later awarded the John Chard decoration.

While a student he was an active member of the dramatic society, and after the war, while he was superintendent of the Frere Hospital in East London, he was the moving force responsible for establishing

the East London Guild Theatre. There he wrote the stories and produced superb pantomimes in conjunction with his great friend, the late Arthur Marks, who provided the music.

For most of his professional life he was an enthusiastic Rotarian. He was President of Rotary in East London and Charter President in Rondebosch. He was also an active freemason and Master of the Lodge in East London. Here in Cape Town, while coping with the arduous duties of a dean who had to serve not only the university but also the hospitals department of the Cape Provincial Administration, he participated in many extracurricular activities. He was the University's representative on the South African Medical and Dental Council and served on numerous subcommittees of that council. He served on Cripple Care, which had been his special "baby" since 1967, and after his retirement he became chairman and devoted a great deal of his time and effort to that organisation, being particularly concerned with acquiring wheelchairs and providing access for these to buildings. He was also a very active member of the Eye Bank Board and of the Chris Barnard Fund.

He was a real father figure to the physiotherapists for many years, and after his retirement continued to represent them on the Medical Council. He was also a great champion of the logopaedists, chiropractors, optometrists, occupational therapists and nursing profession. Indeed, he was as busy after retirement as he had been before.

However, he kept some free time for gardening, which he loved, carpentry (he made superb picture frames) and, in recent years, bowling (I believe he became quite a champion).

Last, and by no means least, was his devotion to and his concern for his family, who have enjoyed what William Wordsworth expressed as: "That best portion of a good man's life — his little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love." To his wife Nan, his son Pat, his daughter Lynne and their spouses, Wendy and Ernie, as well as the four grandchildren, I wish to convey our sincerest condolences. I am sure that you can depend on all of us for support because Brom was a very dear friend, and "the true way to mourn the dead is to take care of the living who belonged to them . . ."

PROFESSOR B. BROMILOW-DOWNING (1912-1980)

Many and distinguished have been the tributes paid to Professor Bromilow-Downing, be they in his role of President, subsequently Hon. Life President, of our Society (his name appeared on the title page of this Journal for probably as long as most of us can remember), or in his role as member of the South African Medical and Dental Council with special responsibility for the Supplementary Health Professions, or perhaps in his role as Dean of the University of Cape Town Medical Faculty for 20 years, as active Rotarian and charity worker or even as keen carnation grower and framer of paintings.

However, I would like to pay a more personal tribute, with some scattered thoughts, to *the man*. He was a man's man; keen and interested in sporting activities, especially if the University was represented. As indicated, he was a man of many parts and the way he used to keep them each in their proper place was to "wear the appropriate hat". This gave him the enormous ability to be both boss and friend, to deliver a gentle rebuke when needed, yet the next minute to offer valuable and generous help. He had a firm framework of values within which he judged the many dilemmas which faced him and if he ever suffered

doubt, he did not show it. Yet, if he had erred, he was not too proud to admit it.

He could always be relied upon to act as master-of-ceremonies at a social gathering (how many generations of U.C.T. physios. must remember him and his wife, Nan, at the departmental year-end party?), as he could also be relied upon for a few remarks to introduce or thank a speaker. His speeches always had the hallmarks of brevity, appropriateness and accuracy, laced with good humour.

Although hospitalised for a heart problem, he was cheerful and optimistic right up until his final illness struck, from which he passed away quietly, peacefully and mercifully quickly. The last time I spoke to him he assured me that he did not "look back" but was looking forward to, and was busy with, new projects, one of which was a Disabled Living Centre. That is the picture of him I am privileged to remember.

To Nan, his devoted and beloved wife, to Pat and Lynne, his son and daughter, may I say, on behalf of us all, that our deepest sympathy goes out to you. Knowing our own sense of loss we can begin to understand how great is yours and assure you of our thought and support.

C. P. RODSETH