



columns

Annual Meeting to hear more about our important work.

A series of roadshows were held at the end of 2001 in the following cities: Aberdeen, Belfast, Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Londonderry, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and Swansea. Each roadshow included contributions by a psychiatrist, a GP and a service user. A comprehensive and informative pack of materials was prepared for

each contributor, including a specially made CD-ROM and video.

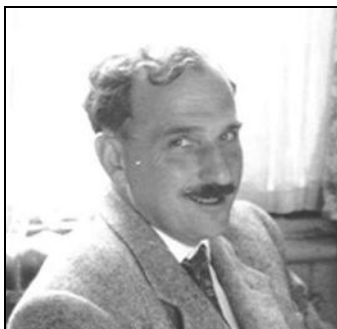
We were also able to send a colourful leaflet, *Time Wasters... Does it Ring a Bell?*, to all GPs in the UK. This brochure set out the aims and objectives of the Changing Minds Campaign and asked GPs to actively discourage stigma and discrimination among their colleagues and patients. It also addressed the consequences of stigmatising patients with

mental health problems in terms of time and resources.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Liz Cowan, Campaign Administrator, on tel: 020 7235 2351 ext. 122 or e-mail: lcowan@rcpsych.ac.uk, by Monday 17 June 2002 at the latest.

Professor Brice Pitt Chairman, Campaign Roadshow

obituaries



Leonard Crome MC

Former Pathologist, Fountain Hospital

Len was born on 14 April 1909 in Dvinsk, Russia, and died on 5 May 2001 in Stoke-on-Trent, England. He qualified in medicine in Edinburgh in 1934. Soon after, in 1936, he became concerned with the situation in Spain and decided to give his medical skills in the fight against fascism. By the age of 28, as permanent chief of the medical services serving the XIth and XVth Brigades, he improvised life-saving treatment in makeshift conditions such as tents, railway carriages and caves.

In the Second World War Len served with the Royal Army Medical Corp in North Africa and Italy and was awarded the Military Cross for bravery at the Battle of Monte Cassino.

After demobilisation, in 1947, he decided to concentrate on the pathology of learning disability. He trained at St Mary's Hospital under Alexander Fleming and Wilfrid Newcomb and, since he wished to specialise in neuropathology, he worked with Alfred Meyer and Elisabeth Beck at the Maudsley Hospital. In 1956 he became a pathologist at the Fountain Hospital – an international centre for the treatment and prevention of learning disability. He regarded himself as an 'ombudsman for the dead' and was scrupulous in obtaining permission for post-mortems from the relatives. He published widely and wrote a much quoted *Pathology of*

Mental Retardation with Jan Stern, where his meticulous wide-ranging experience added substantially to a fresh understanding of the aetiology of learning disability, and, thereby dispelled ancient myths.

He was much respected, generous and kind as a professional collaborator, and he welcomed students and colleagues from around the world. Fluent in many languages and receptive to many cultures, he was a 'citizen of the world on the side of the underprivileged'. He was a principled, courageous and honest man, qualities that sometimes were interpreted as controversial.

He was steeped in Russian culture, which suited him as the Chairman of the Society for Cultural Relations in the USSR from 1969–1976. In addition he was Chairman of the International Brigade Association, which he held until his death. After 'retirement' he wrote *Unbroken. Resistance and Survival in the Concentration Camps*, a book about resistance in the German concentration camps.

In March 2001 the Government's new strategy document on learning disability stated that 'forgotten generations of people with learning disability lost out... a revolution in care is needed... the four key principles of civil rights, independence, choice and inclusion' all lie at the heart of the Government's proposals. These principles were at the heart of Len's professional and political belief. He was 50 years ahead of his time.

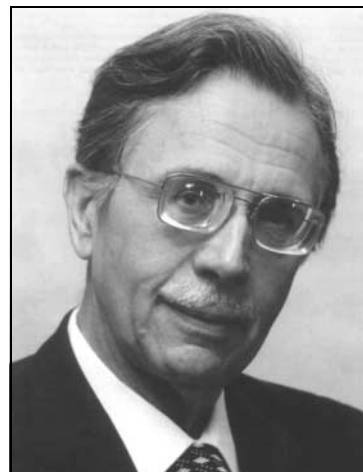
He is survived by two sons, John and Peter, a geriatrician.

Ilana Crome

Remembering Felix Post

Recollections assembled by Tom Arie

When Felix Post died last year there was great sadness but little fuss. Only one formal obituary notice appeared, excellently done by Robin Jacoby (*International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, November 2001, **16**, 1025–1027 – from which the picture of Felix is



reproduced, with permission). Now six friends here remember Felix as their teacher, and his unique mixture of meticulous authority with humility, kindness and quirky humour. My contribution, which will be confined to facts of Felix's life (a personal memoir of mine was in September's *International Psychogeriatric Association Bulletin* and November's *British Geriatrics Society Newsletter*) follows.

Born in Berlin in 1913 to a Jewish mother, Felix came to England in 1934 to complete his medical studies, qualifying at St Bartholomew's in 1939. His house jobs included medicine at the Hammersmith (where he would accompany the visiting psychiatrist A. J. (later Sir Aubrey) Lewis on his rounds). After brief internment as an 'enemy alien' he moved in 1942 to psychiatry in Edinburgh, where he later acquired the MRCP. There he saw the then 'hopelessness of most mental illness'. Professor D. K. Henderson urged him: 'look at all these old people here – why don't you write 'em up?', and, as Felix put it, 'that's what I've been doing ever since' (Then and now, *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 1978, **133**, 83–86).

In 1947, after army service, he joined the Bethlem Maudsley Hospital, where he remained until he retired in 1978. The Felix Post unit for older people is his memorial. There were many papers and three famous books: *The Significance of Affective Symptoms in Old Age* (1962),



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The Clinical Psychiatry of Late Life (1965) and *Persistent Persecutory States of the Elderly* (1966).

Felix was the first chairman of the psychogeriatricians in the College. He tackled that role with enthusiasm, even though the main thrust then was service development rather than clinical research. In 1969–1970 he was President of the Psychiatry Section of the Royal Society of Medicine. Our College made him an Honorary Fellow. Despite efforts of friends (which he would have deplored) he received no public honours.

Felix died suddenly in February 2001. His first wife had died in 1961. His devoted second wife, Kathleen, and son and daughter of his first marriage survive him.

His influence was huge, and he was much loved.

Tom Arie Emeritus Professor of Health Care of the Elderly, Nottingham (Felix's registrar, 1963)

Felix's wise counsel has helped me many times over the years. When, as his registrar, I was presenting patients at his wardrounds, a particular member of the team was in the habit of repeatedly interrupting me. One day I became so irritated that I shouted at her, 'For heaven's sake! Please let me finish. You can have your say in a minute.' This put an effective end to the interruptions, but after the wardround Felix took me aside and gently upbraided me. I apologised to him and admitted that I should not have let my anger get the better of me. Felix looked at me sympathetically, 'I know,' he said with his characteristic prolongation of the 'o', 'You see the young don't know how to behave these days. You have to treat them like psychotic patients.'

Robin Jacoby Professor of Old Age Psychiatry, Oxford (Felix's registrar, 1975–1976)

It is a measure of Felix Post's modesty that, although he was a scholarly founding father of old age psychiatry, he received no academic title (or national honour). I am proud to have been his student and, later, friend and collaborator over a period of 40 years. Among my prized possessions are autographed copies of his books.

Felix was a clinician, teacher and innovator in the investigation of old age affective and delusional disorders. Less well known, is that his open-mindedness led to the first behaviour therapy in this country being conducted on patients under his care, notably by Monty Shapiro and Isaac Marks.

Anecdotes about Felix attest to his warmth, his sheepish espousal of the pun and his somewhat 'germanic' sense of humour. I had dinner with him, his wife Kathleen and Alwyn Lishman a fortnight before his death. He regaled us with plans for their forthcoming Mediterranean cruise, as always with a heavy programme of lectures. Felix took holidays, like most things, seriously.

I miss his company, his advice and the many and varied conversations we had.

A late goodbye to Felix Post – a giant.

Raymond Levy Emeritus Professor of Old Age Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry, London (Felix's registrar, 1961 and 1962–1963)

As a trainee I soon noticed that Felix's opinions about patients at the Maudsley Monday morning conferences were perhaps the best – always to the point, practical and wise. To me he emerged as *the* psychiatric diagnostician. Later, as a colleague, he won my respect. I marvelled at his academic output despite sustained hard clinical work. I remember my pride when we became on first name terms!

In retirement he, with Kathleen, extended great kindness and warmth to his friends, keeping in touch through thick and thin, and dismissing his infirmities with his typically somewhat incongruous sense of humour.

During the last year of his life Felix made an extensive revision of his *magnum opus* on creativity and psychiatric disorder, which involved detailed scrutiny of over 600 biographies of famous men. I was privileged to read the manuscript. Let us hope that it will be published posthumously.

Felix was a man of exceptional intelligence, he was modest, self-deprecating and a pioneer of a difficult speciality. Typically he set his mind against memorial services or other ephemera to mark his passing. This will not obscure the great affection he inspired.

W. A. Lishman Emeritus Professor of Neuropsychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry, London, (Felix's out-patient registrar, 1961)

In early 1959, as the All Fool's Day of my entry into psychiatry approached, I phoned the Dean's secretary to ask what my first assignment would be. 'With Dr Post.' We had all heard of Lewis, Shepherd, Leigh and Stafford-Clark, but I had never heard of Dr Post. Within days of arrival I was told – as I later learned at first-hand – that he was probably the best clinical teacher in the joint hospital. Of many memories, space restricts me to two.

In those first 6 months I had a young woman patient to whom today the ridiculous term 'borderline personality disorder' would be applied. She slashed her wrists; she ran out and took over-the-counter drug overdoses; and she got into physical fights with the charge nurse. I lost sleep wondering whether she would end up dead. On Friday's round Felix said to me: 'On the basis of my experience I do not think she will commit suicide, but if she does, I will go to the Coroner's Court – not you.' I have tried to follow that model.

By an error the Dean's list showed me leaving the Gresham Unit after only 3 months. I phoned the secretary, who confirmed it was an error and assigned the other registrar elsewhere. He was so upset that, although he was a fellow Irishman, he would hardly speak to me for months.

W. O. McCormick Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, (Felix's registrar 1959 and 1960)

Felix was a man of paradoxes. Always the 'European gentleman', he eschewed the politically correct. He was honest to a fault. When criticism was appropriate, he was the ultimate democrat, treating professors, students and especially himself with equal doses of incisive wit, often laced with sprinklings of sarcasm. This neglect of the politically correct probably contributed to the fact that, although many of his students became professors, he was denied that richly deserved title. Under his sometimes inscrutable exterior there was warmth, charm and mischievous humour.

I learned early on that one had to earn his respect; none of that superficial North American coddling from Felix. All the more satisfying to have felt his ultimate acceptance. When he retired, my wife and I received an invitation from him and Kathleen for dinner at his home. This was the beginning of an affectionate and close relationship in which he was mentor and encouraging friend.

Felix's high academic standing lent credibility to geriatric psychiatry and encouraged the next generation of leaders to pursue this neglected area. Remarkably, he accomplished this in a single-handed manner by dint of adaptive obsessiveness, perseverance, insightfulness and intelligence. Our profession is in debt, not least for his courage, his intellect and his honesty.

Kenneth Shulman Professor of Psychiatry, Toronto (Felix's clinical assistant and senior registrar, 1977–1978)