



## obituary

### Elisabeth Shoenberg

Formerly Consultant Psychiatrist, Claybury Hospital and the Medical Research Council Social Unit, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Dr Shoenberg was born on 25 September 1916. She was the youngest of the five children of Sir Isaac and Lady Shoenberg and enjoyed a happy childhood with three older brothers. She was a very gifted child who spent many hours in the print room of the British Museum studying Japanese prints. Her love of painting lasted throughout her life. At Newnham College, Cambridge, she read English and later archaeology and anthropology, intending to become an anthropologist. However, as she wrote in 1984 in a letter from the Australian outback where she was studying depression in the aboriginal population, she realised that she could not bear to be with people who lived in squalor with malnutrition and illiteracy without wanting to do something about it. As a result she switched to medicine.

She qualified in 1947 from King's College London and the West London School of Medicine and, after a short time in general practice, started to practise



psychiatry at Fulbourn Hospital with Dr David Clark. She was then senior registrar at St Bartholomew's Hospital and Goodmayes Hospital. In 1958 she was appointed consultant psychiatrist at Claybury Hospital. *The Adventure in Psychiatry* by Denis Martin (1968) described changes that were already happening to varying degrees at Claybury: moving from the culture and ethos of a traditional mental hospital to a therapeutic community. This was essentially achieved at Claybury in three of the four general admission wards, the in-patient unit for patients with psychoneurosis and personality disorder, the psychogeriatric admission unit and some rehabilitation and long-stay wards. The impact of these changes is still relevant today and is well documented in

the book of essays *A Hospital Looks at Itself* (1972), written by approximately 40 members of the staff and patients of Claybury Hospital and edited by Dr Shoenberg.

She found time throughout her life to travel widely, which gave scope for her abiding interest in all sorts of people and her considerable literary ability, as well as her capacity for friendship, her remarkable sense of humour and skill as a cartoonist. She visited many countries and had a particular love for Pakistan, the Pacific and Australia. On a year's sabbatical leave she went, with the support of the World Health Organization, to India to the National Institute for Mental Health and Neurosciences, to help in developing the psychiatric services, then the poor relation of the neurosciences.

In retirement, apart from her frequent travels, she retained a lively interest in all aspects of life and was active in the University of the Third Age. She visited with the Health Advisory Service and served on Mental Health Act review tribunals. She was a member of the Newnham College Associates. She kept in touch with many friends throughout the world and made each of us feel special. She retained her lively sense of humour to the end of her life. She never married. Dr Shoenberg died on 6 October 2005, following a fall at her home.

**John Pippard and Peter Shoenberg**

## review

### Looking at the Assessment of Sex Offenders (DVD)

David Reiss  
London: Gaskell, 2005, £17.50,  
90 min.  
ISBN: 1-904671-19-5

It is welcome that a subject such as this is now covered in a teaching aid in a visual medium alongside the vast amount of written teaching material that is already available. This DVD serves as a 'safe' introduction to this subject by simulating the experience of 'sitting in' on assessment interviews with offenders and watching professional discussion groups covering important issues.

The DVD packaging itself does not include any written material other than a menu for the DVD. The DVD was easy to navigate and included extras such as

specialist biographies and suggestions for further reading.

The first introductory scenes in the DVD gave a useful perspective of how offenders themselves may feel prior to an assessment by professionals. Following this, the DVD focused on the assessment interviews of two separate sex offenders who had committed very different sexual offences. One offender presented as very sensitive and guarded, compared with the other, who was far more assertive and confrontational in manner. Despite the fact that actors play the parts of the offenders, they were highly credible and leave the viewer convinced of their authenticity until they read the credits.

During the interviews, the two different therapists adopted different interview styles that made them receptive to the individual needs of the two interviewees.

These sessions were highly informative, leaving you feeling as if you are 'sitting in' and providing an insight into the dynamics of such interviews. In addition to the dialogue, the camera focused a great deal on the body language of both parties, particularly eye contact and hand gestures.

The material covered in the assessment interviews included: explanations about confidentiality, obtaining a life history, exploration of grooming behaviour, offence history and identification of cognitive distortions.

As well as filming the interview sessions, the DVD also contains feedback from the two interviewers on the sessions that were filmed. In addition, the DVD showed discussion groups involving eminent workers in the field exploring important areas such as: confidentiality,