

# Peter Baskett

26 July 1934 – 18 April 2008

## Peter J.F. Baskett 1934–2008

*Judith M. Fisher*

Vice-President  
World Association for Disaster and Emergency  
Medicine

Peter Baskett died peacefully, surrounded by his family, on 18th April 2008, after a long illness. He was a founding member of our association, when it was the Club of Mainz, was a past-president and recipient of the Peter Safar Award in 2005. Peter is a sad loss to our association, and indeed to the world. Remembering him over the past few weeks, it was not just his brilliance and ability, but his humor and compassion that kept coming to mind. He was an ambassador for the sick and injured, writing prolifically and constantly looking for the next opportunity to improve the lot of his fellow man.

It was Peter who pioneered the introduction of paramedics and the use of oxygen/nitrous oxide inhalation to reduce pain in the pre-hospital arena. He became a leader in many learned societies and was president of many, not just WADEM. These included The British Association for Immediate Care (BASICS), The CPR Committee of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthetists (WFSA), the European Section of the WFSA, The Anaesthetic Committee of the European Union of Medical Specialists, the European Resuscitation Council (Founder President), the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland, the Bristol Branch of the Bristol Medical Association, the International Trauma Anaesthesia and Critical Care Society, the Society of Anaesthetists of the SW Region, and the United Services Section of the Royal Society of Medicine. He was a Member of Council of the Royal College of Anaesthetists (12 years), a Founding Member of the Resuscitation Council (UK) a Past Honorable Secretary, Section of Anaesthetists of the Royal Society of Medicine, and an active member of both the Joint Colleges and Ambulance Liaison Committee and the United Nations International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction Committee (UK). Peter was an Adviser to the UK Department of Health on Trauma Centers and Criteria Based Ambulance Dispatch.

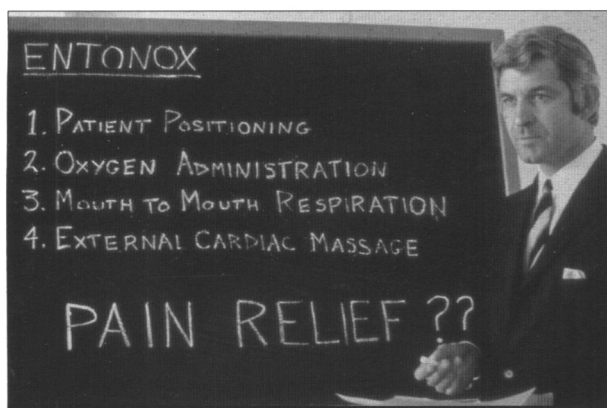
Peter was driven by a desire to teach and share his knowledge. He was an inspirational teacher, especially in the fields of resuscitation and the wider aspects of pre-hos-



pital care. His teaching, combined with diplomacy, helped spread life support courses throughout Europe and the Middle East. He built a cadre of committed teachers who will continue his work.

Away from his official hospital appointments, Peter Baskett was Commanding Officer of 219 Wessex Field Hospital RAMC(V) and subsequently was Honorary Colonel to 243 Wessex Field Hospital RAMC(V) until 2004. He has been the Honorary Civilian Adviser in Resuscitation to the British Army and the Royal Navy and was Emeritus Consultant to the Army. His love of motor sport was channeled into providing pre-hospital care as chief medical officer at Castle Coombe Racing Circuit and in his collection of vintage cars.

Peter derived great joy from his family. He leaves four children and his wife Fiona. Our sympathy goes out to them.



## A Giant Among Us

**Marvin L. Birnbaum, MD, PhD**

Editor-in-Chief

*Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*

We pay tribute to a truly amazing humanitarian whose life has served as a model to many of us. Few physicians have contributed as much to the minimizing the pain and suffering of our fellow human beings as has Peter Baskett. He has been a leader and a pacesetter throughout his life. He worked and often struggled to push medical frontiers forward. He was a pioneer who made it his mantra to tread where others had not dared. He had radical visions as to where prehospital and disaster health should be in the world of medicine—he was able to pursue many of these dreams until they became reality.

Peter was an outspoken advocate for what he believed was right. He also had the political skills to make things happen. Often, he led the way through the nights and brought ideas into the daylight. He was able to take information and weld it into a context that would convince others to join the march. He was as gregarious as he was bright—he loved a good time and loved to share the good times with many of us who looked to his endless energy and drive to get something accomplished. He was fun and serious. He was bright and humble. He was smart, but he always was learning. He was a great listener and a superb, practical, and uncompromising teacher. He respected others no matter their situation and earned their respect. He was intense and gracious.

Peter had an engaging flair that drew the attention of others. He was infectious. He was an innovator and a receptacle for the new ideas of others. He served as an unassuming mentor and was a keen observer of people's potential—and he tended to the potential until it no longer was just a potential.

In every sense of the word, Peter was a good and true friend. He always was there when he perceived he could help.

We will miss Peter, but we never will forget the person he was. We will continue to learn from his being among us, for leading us down the right path, and for his strength of character, his wit, and his humanism. We are grateful for the lessons he taught us and for all he contributed to the World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine, the European Resuscitation Council, and the well being of the citizens of the world.

## The Mark of the Man

**Peter J. Davis**

Head of Risk Planning

Avon Fire & Rescue

Avon, UK

It would be surprising if someone in the ambulance service in Bristol, UK did not at least know of Peter Baskett and during my five years in Avon Ambulance Service NHS Trust (1999–2004) I was no exception. When I first joined as a fresh student straight out of university I was mentored by Bob Davies, who coincidentally was one of Dr. Baskett's first ever students when he developed paramedic courses in Bristol in the early 1970s. As a result, I often was intrigued to hear how the early days of paramedicine were so different from today's—a year in training at Frenchay Hospital, a rotation on the Mobile Resuscitation Unit, the introduction of Entonox in the pre-hospital environment and much more. I also heard much about Peter from other friends and colleagues from the Anaesthetics Department within the North Bristol NHS Trust, many of whom also participated in the local Medical Incident Officer rota and had such enthusiasm for the professional development of our major incident response.

I'm pleased to say that these relationships continued to flourish following my transfer to Avon Fire and Rescue Service in 2004, as did my membership in the WADEM. And so it was that I actually met Dr. Baskett for the first and only time during the 14<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine in Edinburgh in May 2005, we were introduced by a mutual friend, Dr. Wim Blancke (who had himself followed in Peter's shoes by joining the Anaesthetics Department at Frenchay Hospital). Dr. Baskett's lecture following his receipt of the Peter Safar Award was fascinating, and was delivered with such flair and passion for his life's work, I captured on video—a copy of which I sent to him—for which I received a wonderful “thank you” e-mail in return. I was surprised that he even remembered me, having only met the once and probably was just another face in the crowd—but that was certainly the mark of the man.

He was fascinated by my transfer from the “greens” (the ambulance service) to the “reds” (the fire and rescue service) and gave me great encouragement “... to work hard and make a difference.” I only met him once in person, but his memory will live on—a legendary master, and a true inspiration.

## An Inspiration

**Luiz Hargreaves, MD**

Medical Director

Brazilian House of Representatives

My first book of Disaster Medicine was bought when I was still a medical student. This book was *Disaster Medicine* by Dr. Peter Baskett. I have studied a lot of this book, because in Brazil, there was no other in this area and the internet did not exist. During the International Congress of Medicine of Emergency happened in Brazil in 1999, where I was one of the speakers, I was honored to meet with Dr.

Baskett. and I told him that I had bought his book. He asked me, "Which book did you buy?" I said, "*Disaster Medicine*". He answered, "My God, I did not remember that I had written this book, please don't comment with anybody that you read it, in order to hide how old you are." We spent some delicious moments chatting and after that, he said goodbye because he was tired. He was a gentleman, extremely nice, simple and cordial, as every master should be. He, along with Dr. Peter Safar, inspired me to devote myself to disaster medicine. Now, I am sure that he still illuminates us.

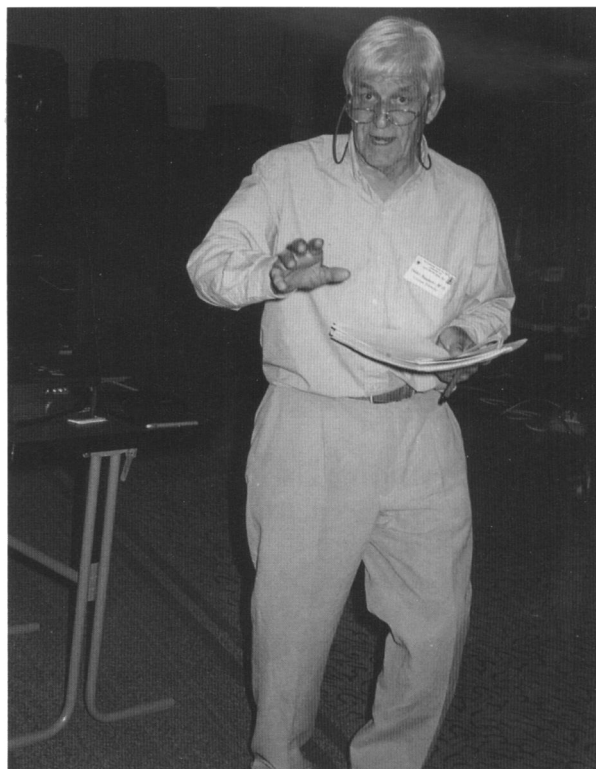
## A Mentor, A Friend

*Steve Rottman, MD*

University of California-Los Angeles  
Los Angeles, California USA

As I write these reflections on my relationship with Peter, I'm in the emergency department of the trauma center where I practice and teach clinical emergency (A&E) medicine at the UCLA Medical Center.

I first met Peter more than 25 years ago, when I was introduced to him at a World Congress in Brighton. I was a junior faculty member, and here was this very bright anesthesiologist with a keen wit, a remarkable sense of humor, and an engaging sense of energy that made me believe that anything was possible in the field of prehospital care and emergency resuscitation. I was young and energetic, and he was, well, less young, but even more energetic. Peter opened many doors for me, introducing me to the global luminaries of immediate care, mentoring me along the way, and even nominating me for membership in WADEM (in those years one had to be nominated by an existing member for admission to the Association). I soon found myself serving on the Executive Committee and, ultimately, was honored to serve as WADEM's President. So, not only do I have great professional memories to reflect so very fondly about Peter, but I have some outrageously hilarious moments that insist on bubbling up to the surface. Sitting next to him as he took a lap at Castle Combs at a ridiculously fast pace in his Ford Capri when I visited him years back; an absolutely unforgettable two hours of to and fro jokes in a private room in a Brighton restaurant between Peter and his close friend Mike Moles; and perhaps the penultimate example of Peter's knack for understatement when several of us managed to bribe a waitress in a Pittsburgh restaurant to bring carafes of red wine vinegar and golden salad oil to our table, responding to Peter's boisterous request to, "Bring much wine, many colors." We told him they were carafes of the house red and white wines respectively, and we nearly convulsed with laughter after hearing him remark that he thought each might be "a bit off" after tasting first one then the other. What a great sport, and a great spirit he was. I'm smiling as I conclude these short notes, even as I must now return to my patients' bedside. Peter honored me with his mentorship and his friendship. I will miss him greatly.



## A Life in the Fast Lane

*Andrew Marsden*

Given that I unfortunately cannot be present to join the Service of Remembrance for Peter, I felt stimulated to add my personal homily to Douglas and Jerry's outstanding obituaries about my dear friend and colleague who has influenced and supported me—directly and indirectly—at almost every stage of my professional life.

My first direct contact with Peter was in 1977 when I was considering presenting a paper to my first international conference—the Club of Mainz—on the subject of Entonox and our experience in the emergency services in West Yorkshire. I was apprehensive about seeking Peter's peer review of my draft manuscript for he was a total stranger with, even then, a formidable reputation. I need not have feared—by return of post came a paper almost totally re-written in red ink with an apology for the corrections accompanied by the excuse "Well you did ask, dear boy!" My visit to Mainz resulted in a long and rewarding friendship with Peter in the field of resuscitation, emergency and disaster medicine—I have assisted him (and been stimulated by him) to edit books, review journal articles, develop guidelines, and organize conferences, I have tried to emulate him in planning and introducing services for clinical care.

Soon after, I visited Frenchay to see for myself, the Resuscitation Training Room that he had pioneered. I was impressed at how he had been able to bring multiple disciplines (including medicine and surgery, nursing, and ambulance) together with a common purpose—a quality which he developed all through his life and, especially in founding the

various resuscitation bodies throughout the world. Nowhere was this exemplified quite so much as on the organizing committee of the Brighton World Conference which pulled together under his capable chairmanship Cardiology (Douglas), General Practice (Judith), A&E (myself) health service administration (Ron Bailey) and others. This ability to empower and entrust continued with his involvement in trauma care, the Joint Royal Colleges Ambulance Liaison Committee and other facets of prehospital care.

My title "A Life in the Fast Lane" describes how Peter ran his professional and family life with a speed and energy which I have not seen in any other person. Once, when I stayed with him, midweek, in Bristol he organized a house party following the opening of an art gallery of which he was patron. This persisted until after 2 am. When I arose as agreed at 7 am for breakfast the following day, he had already been into the hospital and reviewed the morning post and was in the process of dictating a letter to his registrar on medical ethics to be sent to the *Times* that day. Our visit to a resuscitation facility, conducted at speed in his Sierra Cosworth, took in Castle Combe on the way! A similar experience occurred when we visited Ireland for the Casualty Surgeons' Conference when his banter with the Irish Garda at a road check (Q Where do you think you are—Brand's Hatch? A. No—that was last weekend) is unforgettable. As were the Pittsburgh and Hong Kong conferences where the Moles/Baskett double act was legion!

Peter always had an amazing sense of balance and judgement. He always said the right things in the right places whether meeting royalty or in professional examinations (whereas he left the wrong things to be said in the wrong places!). But his greatest ability was to inspire, and those of us who knew him always felt that it was a privilege to have earned his trust and to have received his support.

There were many times in my contacts with Peter when I was able to witness the caring side of the man—his clear concern at not letting the side down and failing (as if he would!) when undertaking the first UK ATLS instructor course, his humility at the anticlimax of the World Congress organizing Committee meeting ("Never again" we all said but, out of duty and respect to Peter, we did) and his compassion when one of his students, mentees, or examinees had fared not too well. In his life in the fast lane, he always found time for everyone, no-one was too small nor no task too great. His personage is severely missed, his memory will be with us to our ends.

Perhaps he is up there now with his red pen, correcting these words of respect and modestly playing down his numerous achievements for which we share our memories and give thanks.

## Remembrance

*Judith M. Fisher*

Vice-President

World Association for Disaster and Emergency  
Medicine

A Memorial Service was held for the late Dr Peter John Firth Baskett, a past president of WADEM in Bristol Cathedral on 20th of September 2008, I had the privilege of representing the WADEM, and was delighted to see several other WADEM members there, including Dr. Malcolm Fisher (Australia) and Professor Wolfgang Dick (from Germany). Unsurprisingly, the Cathedral was full and the service was a wondrous celebration of Peter's life. Touchingly the celebrants were a consultant colleague of his, Revd Nigel Rawlinson FFAEM (RCSEd) and a member of one of his earliest paramedic classes, Revd Royden Harrill, both of whom were regular visitors during his long period of illness.

The service was divided into areas of his life, interspersed with some outstanding music from the cathedral organist and choir. In the first section, his brother Tom paid tribute to Peter, the brother and family man, and each of his four children (Simon, Lucy, Ophelia, and Lucy) read a poem of their choice. His contribution to pre-hospital care was lovingly and amusingly presented by Professor Douglas Chamberlain, Peter, the soldier by Col. Harry Griffiths, and after more music and prayers, Anaesthesia, Past Present and Future was represented by a reading from Ecclesiastes (3:1-2,4-7,9-14) by Dr. Sheila Willatts, tributes from the present President of the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland, Dr. Richard Burks, and Dr. Ed Charleton, another anaesthetist who was secretary of the Association while Peter was president and finally from Dr. Jerry Nolan, now editor of *Resuscitation*, a colleague of Peter's at one of his other loves, motor racing medical coverage (for 27 years).

The service ended with prayers, and then a rousing rendering of "Jerusalem"

Over the nearly 40 years of our friendship I thought I had appreciated how wide the Baskett net reached, but this celebration lit many corners of his life of which I was unaware. Peter had an unending zest for life, a huge compassion for his brothers in distress, and an influence for which we, and many patients, will always be grateful.

Rest in peace, my friend, you have earned it.

# Call for Artwork

The cover design of *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* calls for a photograph of relevant artwork.

If you have access to artwork that you think may be appropriate, please submit a high-resolution print or an electronic file (in TIF or JPG format) to:

Dana Schmidman, Editorial Assistant  
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All submissions will be evaluated by a panel of judges.  
Items not selected will be returned to the sender.