

Gerald Corney 1928–2001

Ian MacGillivray

Gerald Corney died on November 28, 2001 of a pulmonary embolism following a hip operation. The son of a policeman, he was born in Yorkshire on the September 27, 1928. After attending school in Halifax and Blackpool he qualified in medicine at the University of Liverpool in 1952 and went on to take diplomas in obstetrics and child health in 1958 and 1960. This was after he had held a short-term commission in the Royal Navy as a Surgeon Lieutenant from 1953 to 1957. During his service he spent a year in the Far East on a survey ship and it was then that he formed a life-long attachment to the Orient and its people. This interest was instrumental in him forming friendships and assisting many young men from here in their various careers. When he returned from service he pursued a career in paediatrics, holding posts in Birmingham and Oxford and it was there that he was awarded an M.D. in 1966 for his thesis on twin-twin transfusion in monozygotic twins. This formed the beginning of a life-long interest in twins and twinning.

Although his early training was in paediatrics his interest in twinning took him into genetics and he was appointed to the scientific staff of the MRC Human Biochemical Genetics Unit, the Galton Laboratory, University College, University of London and continued there until he retired in 1989, when he was made an Honorary Lecturer in the Department of Genetics and Biometry, University of London. This allowed him to continue his research interests which were now mainly

in genetic disorders in childhood. At the Galton Laboratory he became expert in the types of twinning and the determination of zygosity.

It was because of this that he was approached by the late Percy Nylander who became Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in the University Hospital, Ibadan, Nigeria. Between them they initiated the Aberdeen registry of twin births in the 1950s. This registry has been maintained and continues to provide much to the understanding of twinning and twins.

He was an active member of the International Society for Twin Studies for many years and had been a faithful attender and contributor to meetings of the society at home and abroad. He was a particularly valuable member of the society as he had an interest and an expertise in both the genetic and obstetric/paediatric aspects and thus helped to form links between the various sections and members of the society.

The mythology and customs associated with twinning had a particular fascination for him, probably because of his involvement with Nigeria, where there is the highest dizygotic twinning in the world and a wide variety of attitudes to twins and mothers of twins.

Although Gerald was rather a private and reserved person, he was a very good and generous friend. Many clinical geneticists were helped in their early careers by Gerald at the Galton Laboratory. His quiet and unassuming manner and his dedicated sense of duty endeared him to his many friends and colleagues.