

when I next saw Hugh I waved it in front of him and explained its background. The rest of his face became secondary to a broad smile. 'And were you at all disappointed on reading it again?', he asked merrily. 'Not at all, the message is still right, 40 years later', I responded. And it was.

Hugh was blessed with a happy marriage to Joan Casket (Freeman), well known as a professor of psychology who has recently received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the British Psychological Society for her work with gifted children. In their 54 years together they constantly encouraged and supported each other's work. She and their three sons, Stephen, Justin and Felix, a daughter, Rachel, and two grandsons, survive him.

Peter Tyrer

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Seymour Jamie Gerald Spencer KSG



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Seymour Spencer, although a general psychiatrist, had special interests in the care of young people and the relation between psychiatry

and religion. He was born a Jew and died a papal knight.

Seymour was born on 4 May 1920 into a successful Jewish family, the Schlesingers. His father was a banker and his mother came from a family of prominent industrialists. His great uncle had been the governor of Hong Kong and later of Queensland. Seymour was a gifted pupil and won a scholarship to Winchester where he was third on the Roll. In 1938, he went up to Oxford to read medicine and it was in the following year, after the declaration of war, that Seymour changed his surname to Spencer. He qualified in 1943, and in the same year met a monk from Ampleforth Abbey who so impressed him that he decided to convert to Catholicism.

Seymour Spencer's first training post was in gynaecology with Professor Chasser Moir in Oxford, his second was in general medicine with Sir William Hume in Newcastle. He then served in the Royal Army Medical Corps, mainly in India, until 1947. After demobilisation Spencer returned to Oxford, this time to train in psychiatry at the Warneford Hospital. He obtained the DPM (then the standard qualification in psychiatry) in 1951 and stayed in Oxford for a further 3 years while he successfully completed a doctoral thesis on student health. From Oxford, Spencer moved back to Newcastle as first assistant to Professor (later Sir Martin) Roth before taking a consultant post in Exeter. He and his growing family were happy in Exeter but when a consultant post became vacant at the Warneford Hospital, Spencer returned to Oxford where he was to spend the rest of his life.

In Oxford, Spencer worked as a general psychiatrist while developing his interest in the emotional problems of young people. He got on well with the young who warmed to his outgoing personality, his enthusiasm, his eccentricities, and his liking for puns and jokes. At the same time, he had natural empathy with young people, with an understanding of their points of view and their problems. Working with the clinical psychologist May Davidson, he helped to develop services for undergraduates at a time when there were no student counselling services. Together with others, they persuaded the university authorities to allow mentally ill students to take their examinations while in hospital, thereby safeguarding the future careers of many talented young people. During this time, Spencer became advisor to a nearby school for maladjusted children, and psychiatric advisor to a leading public school. Later in his career, he took charge of the service for adolescents during a period of reorganisation, and after retirement he worked with people who had intellectual disability. His natural warmth, energy, caring nature and broad clinical experience led to success in each of these roles.

Seymour Spence enjoyed court work and was often called as an expert witness. One barrister described how, in evidence in chief, it was often uncertain what Spencer might say next, but how in cross-examination he was devastating, responding to silks as though they were earnest but not very well-informed medical students. When attending a lecture, he had the habit of closing his eyes so as to concentrate better, thus appearing to be deeply asleep. In the subsequent discussion he would often take the speaker by surprise by asking a penetrating question that showed that he had heard and considered his every word.

Seymour was a devout Catholic and he was deeply concerned with the relationship between psychiatry and religion. His book, *The Good that I Would*, was part of a series on Christian education. It contains an overview of psychiatric and personality disorders, written for laymen, with comments on the way in which these disorders can impede moral responsibility. His work on the interface of psychiatry and religion, which continued throughout his career, was recognised when he became a Knight of the Order of St Gregory. His 90th birthday was celebrated by a mass attended by a large congregation including both the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster and the Archbishop of Canterbury. This was one of four gatherings to celebrate his birthday: there can have been few other 90 year olds who had so many living friends – further evidence of Seymour's lifelong capacity to relate to people younger than himself.

Seymour Spencer married Margaret Behn in 1944 while he was still a houseman. She died in 1999 after 55 years of exceptionally happy marriage. They had five children who, together with his many friends and his strong faith, supported him in the last 12 years of his life. He had nine grandchildren, and one great-grandchild, whose birth gave him great satisfaction in the weeks before his death in May 2011 at the age of 91.

Michael Gelder

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