

obituaries



Mervin Glasser

Formerly Consultant Psychiatrist
The Portman Clinic, London

Mervin Glasser died very suddenly on 9 November 2000, aged 71, following cardiac problems.

Born in Johannesburg in 1928, Mervin came to London in 1952 intent on becoming a psychoanalyst. He studied medicine at the Westminster Hospital Medical School, graduating in 1958, and qualified as a psychoanalyst in 1963. Later, he was to become a training analyst. After his retirement from the NHS in 1993 he served as Director of the London Clinic of Psychoanalysis for 5 years. Until his death he remained a sought-after teacher and clinician. He was probably the most prolific internationally known writer in his field that this country has produced in his generation. He was responsible for several theories, most notably the 'core complex'.

After having worked with Anna Freud and having been involved in setting up the Brent Consultant Centre (now Johnson House), for the psychoanalytic treatment of adolescents, Mervin was appointed to the Portman Clinic in 1971 and for much of his time served as Chairman.

Mervin lived for psychoanalysis and with this devotion went a painstaking belief in careful research. For many years he ran a violence workshop – a clinical setting in which to discuss violent cases, but with a research component. After his retirement Mervin wrote this up in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. He called it 'On violence. A preliminary communication', thus characteristically challenging the rest of us to continue the work. Whoever had the courage to commit themselves long term to this workshop learned a depth to working that could not be imagined and which I personally value in terms of proving that something can often be there all along but it might take many hours of labour to find it. Some fell by the wayside, unable either to bear the level of expectation about detail or to trust that the time spent would yield results. Whether there were differences of opinion or

clashes of personalities, Mervin had an extraordinary sense of humour and his warmth and sense of fun often made up for everything.

Mervin was passionate about other things in life apart from his work. He loved his family, his garden, which was always full of exotic flowering plants – perhaps an attempt to keep in touch with his native South Africa – the arts and football.

GLASSER, M. (1998) On violence. A preliminary communication. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, **79**, 887–902.

Anne Zachary

William Henry Allchin

Formerly Consultant Psychiatrist
Hampshire Area Health Authority

Bill Allchin died in Wales on New Year's Day aged 79 years. He was born in Harrow into a medical family; his father was a pioneering specialist in radiotherapy at the Westminster Hospital. After school, in 1940, he joined the army and landed in Singapore shortly before the 1942 surrender. As a prisoner of war he worked on the notorious Burma railroad and his terrible experiences in captivity affected him greatly. He was much impressed by a fellow prisoner, Ron Wait, a missionary, and like him, he was able to forgive his abusive captors. Indeed, he kept in touch with some of the Korean and Japanese guards for many years. In 1995, at the commemoration service for VJ Day in Winchester Cathedral, he was chosen to give the address. He spoke of the post-traumatic stress that affected former prisoners for decades and referred to his own good fortune in the relief he obtained through his personal analysis.

Returning from the Far East, he decided on a medical career and after completing his preclinical studies in Oxford (Balliol College) he moved to Westminster Hospital. After qualification in 1953 he opted for psychiatry and started training at the Maudsley in the era of Aubrey Lewis. He then underwent a personal analysis (Jungian) with Professor Robert Hobson. Interested in adolescence, he studied alongside Dr Philip Boyd, who later set up the adolescent unit at St Luke's Hospital. Other influences at that time were Drs Anthony Storr, Donald Winnicott and Wilfred Warren. The final phase of his training was at the Portman Clinic treating patients with personality and sexual disorders.

In 1962 he was appointed consultant psychiatrist in the Wessex Region, where he took over the medical directorship of Leigh House, the regional adolescent unit in Chandlers Ford. The unit had been open barely a year and had just lost its first director. In the second consultant there Bill found a kindred spirit and they worked together in a happy and creative way until Dr Rosenberg retired in 1976. Together with their team they developed a pioneering treatment programme that gained a national reputation. In parallel with his in-patient work, Bill made a considerable contribution to the community services in Hampshire from his second base at the Southampton Child and Family Guidance Clinic. In the 1960s, when multi-disciplinary team work was in its infancy, he was there already. His gentle demeanour and his quiet reflective style meant he was ideal in this context. His skills as a clinical adviser and teacher were greatly valued by all the young people's services. A moving speaker, he made regular contributions to courses and training programmes in and around Southampton and its university. He initiated 'hands on' liaison work in several residential units. He worked with the Richmond Fellowship in the development of the Bracken Place Hostel. Together with David Duff and John Evans he was a key figure in establishing the Association for the Psychiatric Study of Adolescence.

He retired from the NHS in 1978 but carried on working privately and with a number of agencies. He had a long and fruitful attachment to the Cotswold Community. His sense of community ran deep and his endeavours took him well beyond the confines of medicine. He

