

DOUGLAS J. HARMAN

1915–2003¹

After a long illness, lovingly nursed by his family and many carers, “Doug” Harman died at home in December 2003. He was born in Ramsgate, Kent, in 1915 and educated at Chatham House School, followed by medical studies in Edinburgh University. After marriage to Gladys in 1939, they embarked on a journey to China to work with the London Missionary Society (now the Council for World Mission). Following language studies in Amoy, they went to a small mission hospital in Changchow in the province of Fukien. Three children were born there, Chris, Rod and Pat. By 1944, the Japanese war against China became so dangerous that the family had to leave, trekking through China and eventually by air into India, over mountainous terrain, ravines and rivers, subjected to bombing and often short of food.

After a period of furlough in Britain, they returned to China in 1946 and worked there until 1950, during which time the family increased with the birth of Sheila and Tony. Doug later spent a period with the LMS in Zambia (previously Northern Rhodesia), where he further developed his interest in the management and treatment of leprosy. In 1956, he was seconded to The Leprosy Mission in Hong Kong, based on the island of Hay Ling Chau. Although not trained as a surgeon, he learned to operate on hands damaged by leprosy, using techniques pioneered by Dr. Paul Brand, whose work in this field had already gained international recognition. In 1960, Doug returned home and from 1961 until his retirement in 1980, worked at the Leprosy Study Center in London, mainly on the histopathological changes in the tissues of leprosy patients from many parts of the world.

By nature modest and retiring about his experiences and accomplishments, he nevertheless contributed a remarkable account of the work of the public health nurses of the Changchow Union Hospital (*Conquest by Healing*, Volume XXVII, No. 1, March

1952), including the building of a new hospital, the setting up of immunization clinics and the development of mobile clinic work in neighboring villages. The epic story of their heroic trek from the Sino-Japanese war into India and then back to Britain has yet to be written, but it is clear testimony to the immense determination of Doug and his family, backed by their deep Christian faith.

In the Leprosy Study Center in London, in association with Dr. R. G. Cochrane and Dr. S. G. Browne, Doug “recycled” his medical talents to become a specialist histopathologist in the examination of tissues from patients with leprosy, leading to the steady development of this Center as one of great excellence in this field. The service offered included a full report of the microscopic findings, usually accompanied by a letter offering appropriate advice on general management and drug treatment. The Center was founded (as The Leprosy Research Unit) in 1953, and by 1977, a communication to the Royal Society of Medicine in London (*Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, October 1977, 70(10), 731–732) referred to the collection and examination of over 13,000 biopsies, to which figure several thousand more can be added before the Center closed a few years later.

Doug’s contribution in this field was enormous, and largely unrecognized. His meticulous reports were accompanied by stained slides that were posted back to those who had submitted each biopsy, so that they could learn from the microscopic findings in their own patients. As a teacher, he was in a class of his own; kindly, endlessly helpful, slow to criticize and manifestly well informed about all aspects of this difficult speciality.

Following his death in December 2003, the family and many friends came to the Eltham United Reformed Church for a service of thanksgiving. In her moving address, the Reverend Margaret Juhasz quoted the words of one of her predecessors, Ronald Ward: “Nobody could know Douglas well without being aware of a certain

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fineness in his personality. This isn't quite the word, but I can't think of a better. His integrity and sensitivity were there for all to see, as was his quiet sense of humor, which I found most endearing. Quiet is a good word for him. His gentle voice and manner reflected a tranquility within which was the fruit of a steady faith. I am sure it is this which helped him through all the blows and disappointments of life."

Our sympathy goes to Christopher, Rod-erick, Patricia, Sheila and Anthony, and to all those in the mission and medical fields who had the privilege of knowing him.

—A. Colin McDougall

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