

David Campbell

— the Quiet American Brit

I am sad to report the death of David Campbell. He died on August 25th at the Marie Curie Centre, Hampstead, North London surrounded by his family. He developed bile duct cancer 18 months ago.

David was born in Chicago in 1943. After graduating from high school he went to Kenyon College, Ohio, to study psychology, and eventually went on to the University of Boston where he gained his PhD in clinical psychology.

He came to London in 1972 and shortly afterwards he joined one of the main loves of his life — his beloved Tavistock Clinic — where he was to work for the next 37 years. It was here that he developed a national and international reputation as a clinician, theoretician, supervisor, organisational consultant, researcher and writer. He was particularly well known for bringing the ideas of the original Milan team to the United Kingdom, and he added significantly to the development of those ideas, along with his colleague, Ros Draper. Together they established a publishing company to encourage the development of Milan and post-Milan systemic thinking, with a particular emphasis on the application of those ideas for practice. After a couple of years the success of this enterprise resulted in it coming under the umbrella of Karnac Books (London and New York). David had a marvellous gift for making complex ideas accessible. His numerous books and papers, his therapy and his supervision, had an exquisite clarity. This, together with his quiet, authoritative, engaging and warm manner contributed to the enormous high regard in which he was held by his peers and trainees. This was evident at the Festschrift that was organised for him in May by his wonderful colleagues at the Tavistock. People he had trained and worked with came from all over the world to pay tribute.

He was a founder member of both the British Association for Family Therapy, and the Institute of Family Therapy (IFT) in London. At the latter he was a clinical supervisor on the Masters program, and over the years contributed to all the other programs at that Institute. He also served on the IFT Board.

David was a quiet, yet sociable, man with a lovely dry sense of humour. He also used to occasionally delight in being mischievous. A few years ago I was involved in commissioning an update from him on the development of the original Milan ideas for the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*. When the article came out in 2003 it included in the biographical information about him that he was an ex-fighter pilot. This seemed to be a bit incongruous with what I knew about him, but I accepted it anyway. He was absolutely deadpan with me and I was completely taken in. A year or so later he actually told me (with a sweet smile across his face) that he had been somewhat economical with the truth. He had been asked to spice it up a bit, he said. And with great relish, spice it up he did. More recently,

and in the context of his (co-authored) book *Taking Positions in the Organisation* (2006), I joked that perhaps it was a case of wish fulfilment positioning!

Although he became an honorary Brit he never lost touch with his roots and had a house on the shores of a lake in Northern Michigan that he adored visiting with his other love, his family — Jane, his wife, and their children Briony and Jesse. He had hoped to go back there this summer but it was not to be. He loved the water. He liked to sail and was actually a water-skiing champion in his youth.

I knew David for nearly 30 years. He trained me, we were colleagues on various training courses, we co-edited a book on supervision and we were friends. Along with his family and his colleagues I shall miss him dearly. I shall miss his intelligence, his warmth, his humour and the sparkle in his eyes. And because of all that I shall deeply miss our friendship growing into old age.

Barry Mason
London