



obituary

Dr Sydney Clifford Brookfield Yorke

Formerly Psychotherapist/
Analyst, Watford General
Hospital, Watford

Dr Yorke was born in Rotherham on 18 October 1922 where he attended the Rotherham Grammar School for Boys. He started his medical studies at King's College Hospital in London in 1942, but in 1945 his studies were interrupted when he joined a group of medical students invited to help those suffering from starvation in Holland. This move would have a lasting influence on his life as instead of Holland he found himself in Belsen, the Nazi concentration camp in Germany. There, he later described, he was faced with a scene 'so horrific it was beyond imagination'.

He resumed his medical studies and subsequently did his National Service as a medical officer in the Royal Navy. After the war he specialised in psychiatry at the Maudsley Hospital. In 1958 he met Dr Valerie Thompson and they married in 1959; she went on to become a Consultant at the Royal Free Hospital.

Dr Yorke met Freud's daughter, Anna, whose own life, and those of her family, had been threatened by Hitler's persecution. This was to have a profound influence on his professional life. After working at the Cassell Hospital he trained as a psychoanalyst at the British Psychoanalytical Society. He qualified as



an Associate Member of the British Psychoanalytical Society in 1964 and became a Full Member in 1967, after which he was appointed as a Training Analyst. He was made an Honorary Member in 2003.

In 1967 Dr Yorke accepted from Anna Freud the post of psychiatrist-in-charge at the Hampstead Treatment Clinic where she had created a training course in child psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. He completed his training as a child psychoanalyst in 1978 and was invited to take over from Anna Freud as Director of the Clinic. Feeling that he was not sufficiently experienced, he accepted on condition that he shared the directorship with Hansi

Kennedy, another Viennese child psychoanalyst. Yorke became an expert in the Diagnostic Profile, a very thorough diagnostic method devised by Anna Freud and her collaborators for the psycho-analytic assessment of adults, adolescents and children.

He was a man of many talents, equally at home talking about psychoanalysis, literature and films as playing piano, trumpet or saxophone and singing with his colleagues at his beloved Hampstead Clinic during some of the cabaret representations for which he was most celebrated. He was also a talented film-maker and a jazz musician.

After he ceased to be the Medical Director of the Centre, he continued to see his private patients there. He also continued to mentor many students and colleagues who often sought his advice. Towards the end of his life, despite illness and great physical pain, he continued to be available to those who wished to consult him about both adult and child psychoanalysis.

The new generation did not have the opportunity to know him, but his death brings a deep sense of loss to those of us who had the privilege to meet him and to work with him in one capacity or another.

Dr Yorke died on 27 June 2007 and is survived by his wife Valerie and two children, Rachel and John. He will be greatly missed.

Luis Rodriguez de la Sierra

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