

In Memoriam



*(photograph courtesy of the
Royal College of Psychiatrists)*

The British Branch of the International League Against Epilepsy is sad to record the death of its distinguished President, Professor Sir Desmond Pond, on June 29th, 1986, during his term of office.

Desmond Pond was born in 1919. He was academically and clinically gifted with wide-ranging interests that led to an outstanding career, as the following few milestones will illustrate. He obtained a double first at Cambridge, where he studied Natural and Moral Sciences. He trained in Medicine at University College Hospital and at Duke University Medical School on a Rockefeller Scholarship (1942–1944), and qualified on both sides of the Atlantic. He soon showed an interest in psychiatry, and from 1948 to 1952 he was Senior Lecturer in the Department of Neurophysiology at the Maudsley Hospital. From 1952 to 1966 he was consultant psychiatrist at the Maudsley Hospital. From 1952 to 1966 he was consultant psychiatrist at the Maudsley and University College Hospitals. In 1966 he was appointed to the first Chair of Psychiatry at the London Hospital. He was on the Neurosciences Board of the Medical Research Council from 1968 to 1972. Later, he served as President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists from 1978 to

1981, during which he was knighted. Finally, he served as Chief Scientist to the Department of Health and Social Security from 1981 until his retirement in 1985.

Within the general field of psychiatry he developed special interests in epilepsy, childhood development, and the influence of family, environment, and biological factors. This was illustrated in 1961 in his Goulstonian Lectures to the Royal College of Physicians on psychiatric aspects of epileptic and brain-damaged children. He was interested in the epileptic patient in his social setting and concerned with the emotional, intellectual, and social development of the child with epilepsy. He did the first epidemiological and General Practice study of epilepsy in this country. He later became an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners. He initiated a mother and baby unit in the socially deprived area of the London Hospital. He was a founder member of the Institute of Religion and Medicine and, in his Lidell Lectures at the University of Newcastle in 1971, he explored changing relationships between psychiatry, religion, sociology, and the law. His personal and social skills were recognized not only in the Presidency of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, but also as Chairman of the Conference of the Royal Medical Colleges.

The fact that he was willing to accept the Presidency of the British Branch of the League Against Epilepsy at the end of such a very distinguished career encompassing so many interests emphasized the high priority and concern he always gave to epilepsy and to the sufferers of the disorder and their relatives. For many years he was associated with the British Epilepsy Association as secretary and chairman of the Medical Advisory Committee, and later as a member of Council. He encouraged and supported the educational activities of the Association, and recently helped to establish the Epilepsy Research Foundation. His wife Helen, also a physician, always supported his interest in epilepsy.

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