

Yvonne Lejeune, as we knew her professionally, Yvonne Lewitton as she was in her family and private life, did not see life in the framework of religious ideas and this assembly today is a meeting of people who knew her, worked with her in many various ways, and were held to her by the warmth of her friendship. We have come to pay tribute to her work, to celebrate her memory, to reflect with gratitude on the ways in which our lives have been enhanced by the part she played in them and to express our deepest sympathy with Archie and Andrew and Linda and their families.

Yvonne's death has brought a great sadness to many people. But the manner of her going from us was entirely congruent with her life. During her illness, she remained the centre of her family and a core group of friends. She discussed with them what was happening to her and what she wished to take place when she died.

She wanted to give her family and friends a sense of completion and of wholeness.

Her life was ending and she made it possible for those closest to her to make the experience a celebration and a creative leave-taking. Only a few hours before she died she was still engaged in what was going on in the community outside and talking about her family and friends.

If she knew these words of Rabindranath Tagore, and maybe she did, she might well have made them her own:

Let me not ask to be sheltered from dangers
but to be fearless in facing them.

Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain
but for the heart to conquer it.

Let me not look for allies in life's battlefield
but to my own strength.

Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved,
but hope for patience to win my freedom.

She was not afraid of death and in her dying she released those who knew and loved her, from anguish and morbidity, by her strength of character and her courage. She gave us the freedom to go on.

In reflecting on the details and quality of her life we remember her as wife and mother and friend, as clinical psychologist, psychotherapist, university teacher and researcher, consultant, counsellor, befriender, as an opponent of inequality in society and as an implacable opponent of apartheid in South Africa and its manifestations everywhere in the world.

Yvonne Lejeune was born in Johannesburg on the 7th of July 1917. She grew up and went to school there. She graduated at the University of Witwatersrand in 1936 and completed a 1st class honours degree in Psychology in 1937. She gained a PhD in 1953 for her work on types of apperception testing in a Child Guidance Clinic.

Immediately on graduation, at the age of 20, she had been awarded a government scholarship for overseas study. She spent 1938 training at the London Child Guidance Clinic and she spent 1939, in the USA at the State Mental Hospital of Delaware and at Iowa State University.

On her return to South Africa she first worked with army families and then in 1941 started the first Child Guidance Clinic in Johannesburg (which was multi-racial) under the auspices of the Mental Health Society with whom she was working as a psychologist. She became Director of the Clinic in 1943, when she^{was} 26 and remained there engaged in psychodiagnostic work and psychotherapy until 1957. In that year, 1957, she was appointed a lecturer in psychology at the University of Witwatersrand, continuing to work at the clinic as a psychotherapist until early in 1963 and at the same time supervising clinical psychology interns at various hospitals in Johannesburg. From 1961-63, she was Chairman of the Professional Committee of the Youth Advice Bureau. She became a Senior Lecturer in 1961 and in 1963 became Acting Head of the Psychology Department at Wits.

In those creative years she was already involved in areas of interest which were to become a hallmark of her community commitment while she was in North Staffordshire, working with parents, Health Visitors, social workers, children and adolescents. She became an Executive Committee member of the South African Psychological Association and Chairman of their standing committee on the training of professional psychologists. She was also active in the lecturers' Association, the equivalent of our own AUT.

Then by the early 1960s, with both of them politically involved, Archie was coming under increasing pressure and harassment from the South African police and the authorities were threatening the future of her multi-racial clinic. They decided to go into voluntary exile. Yvonne applied for the new post of Lecturer in Psychology at the Department of Adult Education at Keele and to

our University's everlasting credit, was appointed without an interview. On December 13, 1963 she left Johannesburg for Keele, ^{with Linda} living first in a guest room in Keele Hall and then in a bed sitter in Porthill, feeling the cold terribly. Archie escaped to join her in early 1964.

It was natural that soon after Archie joined her in England, they should take active steps to establish a local branch of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, with the help of local sympathisers, to spread more widely a knowledge of what was actually happening in South Africa. As time went on it was natural that her political conscience, without losing any of its concern with that, should take in wider objects. As one instance, she was to be found at Greenham Common as recently as last spring, taking a part in the Women's Peace demonstration.

Yvonne was the first lecturer to be appointed to the new Extramural Department at Keele, after it had succeeded to the role hitherto occupied in the area by Oxford.. She came to develop a new subject, as the first full-time extramural lecturer in psychology we had had. Over the years she established a firm programme of courses for the general public, taught by herself and by part-time colleagues. In addition, there were two more specialised fields of work which the department moved into, claiming her support. First was the Child Care course, which trained Child Care officers for work in the social services departments. Her advice in the management of the course and her share of teaching drew on her deep, accumulated experience. Her connection with this ended after the course was transferred to another department of the University. Second was the gradually developing volume of part-time professional training courses for members of the social and probation services, in which she played a full part.

Yvonne's contribution to the life of our local community in the last twenty years has been incalculable. For a number of years she worked voluntarily with the Child Guidance Clinic in Shelton, knowing well that to be a good teacher of practice, she must remain close to clients.

She taught not only social workers, but also residential staff, marriage guidance counsellors, voluntary workers in pre-school play groups. She was instrumental in helping to set up a local association of the British Association of Counselling, now known as Counselling in North Staffordshire.;

Since 1971, she acted as consultant to the Hanley Youth Project, watching it grow from a small, detached youth work team in the centre of Hanley, to the nationally-known neighbourhood and youth work project in the City of Stoke-on-Trent with its outreach work through Fun Days, play schemes and more recently, community sport. Every Monday morning, for many years, was set aside including the provision of lunch, for supervision of the workers, a commitment which did not go unnoticed in other parts of the country, for she was a well-known figure at the national meetings at Keele, for detached youth workers from 1973 onwards.

The hallmark of this phase of her commitment was that she never undertook any responsibility without having quietly examined it first, thought through its aims and possibilities and satisfied herself that whatever other people thought, she would stand by the enterprise through thick and thin, and help it to improve and become more professional.

In all this, she made her contribution because of the value she perceived in the work that was in progress. She neither sought nor expected any reward or recognition. No one will ever know the countless numbers of people who were touched and changed by her wisdom, her knowledge, her charm and her toughness (for sometimes, she could be very tough).

To conclude with a word about Yvonne herself, the person who voluntarily undertook this vast commitment, and enjoyed it. In her personal life she took a deep pleasure in the exercise of practical and creative skills; and this was something her friends could share. At a fairly early time in her life here, she took up an interest in practical painting courses; she attended residential courses at Barlaston and elsewhere, and more recently joined the Saturday courses at Keele on 'Art in Theory and Practice'. She was an amateur, of course; her friends knew she was a gifted one; she loved the challenge and she acquitted herself very respectably. In the last summer of her life she took up photography with similar skill, joy, and achievement. Her creative flair came through also in more everyday matters. She was a memorable cook, for instance, and a skilful embroidress.

She consistently enrolled in other classes too, taught by her colleagues. In the last few years, for instance, she was a regular student of botany. It was a mark of her freshness of outlook, her lively pleasure in intellectual discovery, her delight in the intricate variety of the world as she found it. For her teaching and learning were part of the same process, characteristic activities of lively minds. She was a great walker over the countryside, an inquisitive observer of the things growing on it, and a great traveller. Her exile from Africa was her entry not just to Britain, but to Europe more widely. Her holidays gave her a great love for Greece, for instance; one of her more recent accomplishments was to gain a working knowledge of Greek in her spare time. If the Parthenon could move her so could the Pennines. One weekend soon after she arrived she needed to drive to Leeds, and plotted for herself from a map the straightest route, which ran through Leek, Buxton, Chapel, Glossop, and Holmfirth - not knowing in the least what to expect, for no one had told her about the moors and the mountains. Her joy in the beauty of the journey was a pleasure to share; it was to see the scene again, newly, for ourselves. This fresh vision of hers is something we may remember most vividly.

To see things newly, to see them freshly. This was her particular gift, over the years in which we had the privilege of her friendship: in teaching, in committee, in counselling, in the informal intercourse with her friends. Time and again, when an issue or topic arose on which people had reached the impasse of fixed ideas, of standard interpretations, or comforting prejudice, Yvonne would find a shrewd, quiet question which opened the matter up again and let it shake down into a new pattern.

Behind it was a knowledge of the intellectual resourcefulness of human beings, even in unpromising circumstances. It was a faith in their ability to arrive at new understandings, or to deepen old ones. She knew that people could surprise themselves by their strength and their charity, at least as often as they could deceive and disappoint themselves and others.

It adds up, perhaps, to a definition of wisdom as good as we are likely to reach. In Yvonne's case, it was also a sort of happiness. We are grateful for having enjoyed over so many years the privilege of having her share it with us.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross has written in her ~~book~~ On Death and Dying:

Watching a peaceful death of a human being reminds us of a falling star; one of the million lights in a vast sky that flares up for a brief moment only to disappear into the endless night forever It makes us aware of our finiteness, our limited lifespan. Few of us live beyond our three score and ten years and yet most of us create and live a unique biography and weave ourselves into the fabric of human history.

We take our leave in silence.

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