

# DISRUPTED TRAVELS & MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

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Sometime in late 2019, my former professor of forensic pathology Michael Alan Green had invited me to visit Leeds in March 2020 to stay with him and his wife J. Previously, if I was travelling in Britain, I would always make it a point to spend some time with Mike and J. They have always opened their home to me when I visited Leeds.

Mike told me that he had been diagnosed with untreatable idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, and that he had been given a poor prognosis. My plans were made in December 2019, but the first COVID-19 case in Singapore was announced on 23 January 2020. As the numbers grew, leave applications were cancelled and I had to abandon my travel plans, which I was unable to reschedule due to travel restrictions. I had to be contented with messaging him via WhatsApp and speaking to him via video calls. He was on oxygen therapy and became increasingly breathless in the third quarter of 2020. He also became increasingly

isolated at home, because of the danger of exposure to COVID-19, but he had wonderful neighbours which helped. He was kept company by his loving wife, daughter and cat.

Mike passed away on 27 November 2020 at home, aged 82.

## Doctor and educator

Mike was Emeritus Professor at the University of Sheffield. Before he practised pathology, he was working in anaesthesia and ophthalmology. In 1967, he and J saw an ad in the *British Medical Journal* for the Australian Royal Flying Doctor Service. They eventually left the UK for South Australia that same year, where they stayed for two years. Mike learnt to fly a Piper Cherokee, a single-engine plane. They covered the outbacks of South and Western Australia, where they did counselling, medical work and surgeries, like appendectomies for ruptured appendicitis, and also provided radio consultations (maybe the first form of telemedicine). Mike told me about how they often had to land on the Eyre Highway and board trucks that would bring them to the patients. In 2015, they made a final trip to Port Augusta and reunited with old friends and former patients.

I first met Mike when I was attached to the Sheffield Medico-Legal Centre during my Health Manpower Development Plan training in the early 1990s. He took me under his wing, and I shadowed him. He was deeply respected and trusted by the police; later, when I was handling homicide cases on my own, I was very lucky to be the recipient of this trust by proxy.

Mike was one of the pathologists who examined the deaths perpetrated by serial killer Peter Sutcliffe, also dubbed the Yorkshire Ripper. In Leeds, the area where Mike covered, there were six deaths. Sutcliffe was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1981. Ironically, Sutcliffe died shortly before Mike, on 13 November 2020, from COVID-19.

## Becoming friends

Mike invited me for meals at his home, and that was how I got to know J. They soon became personal friends of mine. Mike was a train spotter and had amazing train sets. He was also a classic car enthusiast, and spent much time in his garage fixing classic cars. He used to take me on long rides in his classic car, along the Yorkshire Dales. On these long rides, we often stopped off at the Tan Hill Inn, a pub which holds the Guinness World Records title for being the world's highest pub, sitting over 500 m above sea level on Yorkshire's highest peak. We sat outside when it was warm enough, and had our beers with smelly sheep walking and sitting next to us.

Mike and J had a flat in Filey, a seaside town in Yorkshire. During summer breaks, and later some holidays in the UK, they gave me free use of their flat. The last time I enjoyed the use of their flat was when I hiked the Cleveland Way, a 175-km-long track in Yorkshire, with Filey being one end of the track.

Mike was a fantastic teacher. He was nominated by students as best lecturer at the University of Sheffield several times in a row – an honour he well deserved. I shall miss him very much. I hope to be able to visit Leeds soon, to talk to J, and to say my final goodbye to Mike at his final resting place. ♦

