
Gerry Slavin has stepped down from the editorial chair after a decade. What better monument to his term of office could there be than the issue of September 1987, published to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the Royal College of Pathologists? The idea and execution were his from the start, and the final result eloquently illustrates what it takes to be a good editor. Surely this should be his *Festschrift*; any other would be less appropriate.

There have been only three editors since volume 1 in 1944. During that time the Journal has gone from strength to strength which bears witness to the effort and ability all three have provided, but the past few years have produced the biggest challenge to maintaining the Journal’s identity and position. Clinical pathology continues to diffuse and divide, with even single disciplines splitting into specialist groups. There has been an exponential growth in the number of new learned societies and associations, many with their own journals, to the extent that a multidisciplinary pathology journal might be considered to be an anachronism. That the *Journal of Clinical Pathology* continues to thrive under such circumstances clearly indicates otherwise, but there can be no doubt that its continued success in recent years has been in large part due to what might be called the “Slavin Factor”.

Easy to recognise but hard to define, the Slavin Factor is a judicious mix of scientific integrity, journalistic flair, business acumen, a “nose” for a good paper (and a bad one), obsession with print quality, and a knowledge of what pleases aspirant authors. Add limitless vigour, compassion, and humour; temper with the merest hint of irascibility, and an understanding of what makes an exceptional editor begins to emerge. But what of the man?

A Lancastrian by birth, Gerry considers himself a Scot because he graduated from Edinburgh in 1957 and took his first pathology job in Glasgow four years later. Becoming one of Tom Symington’s lecturers in that city’s university department led to the opportunity of his secondment to the new Tanzanian medical school at Dar es Salaam for two years, a particularly enjoyed adventure which generated a lasting interest in pathology services abroad. He subsequently accepted a National Health Service consultancy at the new Northwick Park Hospital in 1969, where he was responsible for the development of the histopathology department of both the hospital and the clinical research centre. Fourteen years later he moved to take up a new challenge as Professor of Histopathology at St Bartholomew’s Hospital Medical College, which is where he now works. Apart from editing the *Journal of Clinical Pathology* and being heavily committed to undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, he has published widely on topics which reflect a catholic interest in his specialty, including computer assisted microscopy, gastrointestinal disorders, and lung diseases. He has also taken an active interest in medical politics, serving as a member of Harrow Health Authority, and has been closely involved with the activities and organisation of both the Association of Clinical Pathologists and the Royal College of Pathologists. He is currently one of the College’s three Vice Presidents.

To escape from all this, Gerry’s natural restlessness is channelled into what are euphemistically known as
“outdoor pursuits”. His addiction has reached an advanced stage as he is a sometime Munro-bagger—a term, for those unfamiliar with it, which refers to a morbid compulsion to scramble up any available Scottish mountain over 3000 feet (914 m in SI units). It’s a disease for which the prognosis is usually poor. His tales of most trips are just interesting: that of an excursion to the Black Cuillin of Skye is plain frightening. He is married to Brenda, a consultant chemical pathologist, and has three medically qualified children who have all understandably decided not to follow in their father’s footsteps. For the whole family’s sake one hopes his new found free time will be allocated to something sensible. At least he doesn’t jog.

Happily, Gerry has been persuaded to stay on the Journal’s editorial board. This will enable the office to deluge him with manuscripts and thereby avoid losing the Slavin Factor completely. If the ruse works his successor can look forward to the next phase of the Journal’s history with a little more confidence.

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