

## **Samuel Cherrie Frazer**

**23 November 1922 - 13 October 2016**

Samuel Cherrie Frazer (Sam) FRSE, formerly Professor of Chemical Pathology at Aberdeen University, and an innovative leader in the early years of the discipline of Clinical Biochemistry, passed away in October 2016 in Brisbane, Australia at the age of 93 after a short illness.

Sam and his sister Helen were born of working class parents in the aftermath of the first World War in Airdrie, Scotland. Sam was educated at Airdrie Academy, where he excelled in science and mathematics, winning many medals and awards, and acquired a love of outdoor activities, playing cricket, badminton and soccer with no particular talent, and enjoying hill walking. He won a competitive scholarship to Glasgow University shortly after the early death of his father, and on the advice of his headmaster ("I don't know what it is about, but they tell me it's the upcoming subject") he decided to study Biochemistry and Medicine. The Second World War intervened, and he was in consequence only allowed to study one degree, choosing Medicine, at which he excelled, winning medals and prizes in many of the subjects he studied.

On graduation, he completed internships in Glasgow, and was inducted into the RAF in the latter years of the war as a medical Flight Lieutenant. He served as medical officer in flight bases in the UK during the war, and after VE day was transferred to Egypt and Greece as medical officer for the bases established there for troops transferring to the war in the east. He was mentioned in dispatches for reasons he said were "unknown to him" and rose to the rank of Squadron Leader and the status of last remaining RAF medical officer in Greece, before returning to Scotland on compassionate leave when his mother developed cancer.

On de-enlistment, he decided to complete his studies by returning to Glasgow University to study Biochemistry, and as a second time around student, acquired a love of rock climbing in the hills of Scotland through meeting up with other enthusiasts in student digs. On graduation, he took up a junior lecturer position with Prof J N Davidson, and pursued a research doctoral degree, studying the quantity of DNA and RNA in liver cells as a part of the then highly topical work on the biochemical basis of heredity. This work gave rise to three first author papers with Prof Davidson, and he could have made a career in laboratory research, but decided that he was really more interested in the clinical aspects of biochemistry.

In Glasgow, he met Marion, his wife to be, who, having graduated in Physiology from St Andrews university, had moved back to Scotland from her first job with ICI in England, to take up a Junior lectureship in Physiology at Glasgow University: she became the first woman in the otherwise all male student boarding house in which Sam was staying at the time, and they were married 6 months later in St Andrews in March 1952.

Shortly after the birth of his first son in 1953, Sam was suspected of having TB, and hospitalized for a lengthy period, undergoing a lung resection and acquiring significant deafness from Streptomycin therapy. Having completed his doctoral degree and 6 years as a junior lecturer in Professor Davidson's lab, where he acquired a love of teaching, he realised that this was more his forte than research and moved to Edinburgh to take up a Senior Lectureship in Biochemistry in a department headed by Dr C P Stewart. He there helped establish the clinical diagnostic biochemistry lab, but also spent considerable time organising the first major international Clinical Biochemistry Conference. He also provided essential biochemistry support for the establishment of the first hemodialysis facility in Scotland at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Looking for a definitive position in biochemistry he considered Boston, but did not like the US approach to medicine as a business, and in 1962, with his wife and 4 children, he was lured to Aberdeen to take up the Chair of Chemical Pathology at Foresterhill hospital.

He there established a hospital-wide biochemistry service, which underwent exponential growth under his stewardship, necessitating the deployment of the first computer based pathology reporting system (a PDP 11 with memory at US\$2/byte!), and additionally established undergraduate chemical pathology teaching. He found himself thrown into University politics as an appointed member of

University Court, and at the same time became editor-in-chief of *Clin Chem Acta* on the retirement of CP Stewart. Increasing administrative work for the University, the General Medical Council, and the Scottish Home and Health Department took over from academic and clinical duties, and he was delighted to accept the University's offer of early retirement at the age of 59.

Sam was always the amateur mechanic, delighting in his workshop. He built a working TV from an old oscilloscope when TV became available in Edinburgh, though the 3" circular screen was not particularly good viewing, engineered many working toys for his children, and passed on his interest in mechanics to at least two of his sons. His sons in turn persuaded him to take up ski-ing and he was a longstanding member of the Aberdeen ski club, continuing his ski-ing into retirement, despite at least one ski-ing associated broken leg.

In retirement, he also he used his mechanical skills to restore a vintage Bentley, crafting many otherwise unreplaceable parts from the original blueprints. Marion and he then attended many vintage car rallies in Scotland with the restored car over the years. They also travelled, visiting their sons in England, the US and Australia. He took up golf, but rapidly became the buggy driver for Marion, rather than the player.

When in later life the Scottish weather became too cold for him and Marion, he migrated south to Australia, to Noosa, a beach and golf town, close to his eldest son's home in Brisbane. He maintained good mental and physical health until his late 80s, participating in the University of the third age, and the local bridge club. Travelling around Australasia, he climbed Ayers Rock, and walked extensively in Tasmania and New Zealand. His reflections on his life in retirement echoed his thoughts in earlier life recorded in the Society archives that he was a self-made man, hard-working and intelligent but not as innovative as others and therefore better at assisting others to success, than at looking after his own successes. Decreasing mental and physical health eventually required a move into a retirement home in Brisbane, where he was content to pass his time quietly, observing the world from his room, and devoted to the end to his wife Marion, who, along with three sons, survives him.

**Ian Frazer, AC, FRS**

**Samuel Cherrie Frazer, MB, ChB, BSc, PhD(Glas), Born 23 November 1922. Elected FRSE 1967. Died 13 October 2016**