



Phil Bryden (1934–1996)
in relaxed mood at the cottage
at Sauble Beach on Lake Huron

Philip Bryden

November 14, 1934 – August 18, 1996

Mark Philip Bryden, a founding editor of *Laterality*, died suddenly and unexpectedly on August 18th 1996, while attending the International Congress of Psychology in Montreal. He was 61 years old. Phil, as he was universally known, was closely involved with almost all aspects of research into lateralisation and was in large part responsible for the renaissance of interest in it from the mid-1960s onwards. Although naturally fairly shy and retiring he was tireless in his enthusiasm for the subject, and not only attended almost all of the major societies and meetings, but seemed to know almost all of the important figures in the field and made a point of introducing them to each other. He had a string of successful graduate students, many of them now in teaching positions in Canada and the United States, and he prided himself on making sure that they felt part of a broad community of scholars, always treating them like equals, and making sure that they were introduced to those influential in the field. Needless to say they loved him for it, and whilst conferences are often an opportunity for graduate students to sit around bemoaning the horrors of their supervisors, Phil's students would simply tell the others how good it was being with Phil at Waterloo.

Phil was born in Boston in 1934, and spent his early years there. He later attended Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, *alma mater* of writers Gore Vidal and John Irving, where he studied under the latter's father. Phil's memories of classes with Colin Irving later formed the basis of several of his oft repeated but much loved stories. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology he studied biology, graduating S.B. in 1956, and writing an undergraduate project on reaction times under the supervision of J.C.R. Licklider. Phil then went to McGill University in Montreal. This was the heyday of Hebbian theory, and Mortimer Mishkin, Donald Forgy, Woodburn Heron and others had begun to use tachistoscopic techniques to explore temporal aspects of visual perception, guided by Hebb's theory of cell assemblies and phase sequences. Phil took his MSc under the supervision of Woodburn Heron ("The role of eye movements in perception"), and submitted his PhD under Donald Hebb and Woodburn Heron in 1960

("Tachistoscopic perception and serial order"). It transpired that the tachistoscopic procedures that they developed were also sensitive to differences between the cerebral hemispheres, and in his subsequent work Phil was largely responsible for teasing out the relative contributions of cerebral asymmetry and directional scanning, and later visual attention, in producing differences in accuracy of report between the visual hemifields. At around the same time Doreen Kimura, also then at McGill, showed that dichotic listening could be used to assess hemispheric differences, in ordinary subjects as well as in those with neurological disorders. Between them, although later from different locations and not always in total agreement with one another, Phil and Doreen went on to establish the laterality industry that was built on these two techniques. That industry continues to thrive to this day, and shows no signs of weakening. *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*¹.

As did many others at McGill, Phil learned from Donald Hebb a tolerant but supportive style of graduate supervision, encouraging students to develop their own ideas, and to follow promising leads rather than stick to rigid research plans. Phil liked the concept of "academic parents" and his own graduate students rapidly came to appreciate having had Donald Hebb as one of their "academic grandparents".

After completing his PhD, Phil stayed at McGill for a further three years as a Research Associate and then moved in 1963, very much with Hebb's encouragement, to the post of Assistant Professor at the new university which had just been founded at Waterloo in Ontario, a university which, as its official biography put it, consisted then "Of mud and dreams". He became Associate Professor in 1964, and then a full Professor in 1967 and spent his whole working life at the University of Waterloo, an institution which he loved and knew in immense detail, having seen the "U of W" grow and grow, until the University as a whole, and its Psychology Department in particular, were seen as among the best in Canada, and indeed in North America. That was in no small part due to Phil's ability to guide graduate students, his willingness to contribute to all aspects of academic and departmental life, and in particular to his academic achievements. Although born an American, Phil became a Canadian citizen in 1971, in part as a response to the terrible Kent State shootings in the spring of 1970. His tremendous loyalty to Canada was complemented by a vast knowledge, not only about Canada's history and politics, but also about its geography, and he had travelled to most of its many corners. As one tiny but characteristic detail, at the TENNET meetings, which always take place in Montreal, he insisted that his posters had an abstract in French, albeit not provided by him but by one of his graduate students. Phil's contributions to Canadian academic life were officially recognised in the Donald O. Hebb Award

¹ "If a monument is required, look around you". Anonymous inscription on St. Paul's Cathedral in London, in memory of Sir Christopher Wren, its architect.

of the Canadian Psychological Association for "distinguished contributions to psychology as a science", awarded in 1988, the prestigious Killam Research Fellowship from the Canada Council in 1989-91, and finally Fellowship of the Royal Society of Canada in 1992.

Phil's academic output was enormous and varied in its range. A full bibliography is given at the end of this obituary. Even his early work reflected an immediate awareness of the significance of lateralisation, and if one is looking for the most influential of the pre-1970 papers then it is clearly that in *Neuropsychologia* in 1965; even between 1986 and 1996 it was cited over 160 times, some twenty to thirty years after it had been published. If there is a single work that best encapsulates his achievements then it is of course his book, *Laterality: Functional asymmetry in the intact brain*, published in 1982, and a magisterial summary of the field, full of insights and characterised by his acute intelligence and ability to dissect through ideas. Amongst the mass of other papers, perhaps the over-riding impression is of how many were joint publications, with a vast range of collaborators, all of whom Phil made feel as if they were the only person he was working with, and out of whom he always drew the best. If one paper is to be chosen which summarised many of his concerns over the past few years then it was the critical overview in *Brain and Cognition* of the Geschwind-Behan-Galaburda theory of lateralisation. Phil liked it for an entirely different reason; as he said, it was nice to have a paper in which all three of the authors were known to each other and their friends by their second names.

In its dedication "To my three P's", *Laterality: Functional asymmetry in the intact brain* also gave a glimpse into the important role played in Phil's life by his family, his wife Pat Rowe, whom he met while they were both graduate students at McGill, and who is now Professor of Psychology and Dean of Graduate Studies at Waterloo, and their two daughters, Penny, a PhD in Canadian History who is teaching at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, and Pam, a PhD student in the Department of Kinesiology at Waterloo.

Phil's sudden death is a great loss to *Laterality* and to laterality. He had long talked about the need for a forum for discussing the manifold aspects of lateralisation, not only the psychological and the neurological, but also the biological and the social. He was extremely happy with the first two issues of *Laterality*, which he had seen, and he had great hopes for the journal's future, which we have no doubt will be fulfilled. For laterality in a more general sense, the loss is greater. Although nearing an age when many people would expect to retire, Phil was expanding his intellectual horizons continually and initiating a host of innovative and creative projects, helped by a team of enthusiastic students, assistants and visitors to Waterloo. We will miss his honest, simple decency, his friendship, his sense of humour, his enthusiasm, his breadth of reading and knowledge, and, perhaps most of all, his sheer

intellect, which touched everything from science through to his beloved baseball.

*Chris McManus
Michael Corballis
Barbara Bulman-Fleming*

A University of Waterloo Psychology Memorial Scholarship for graduate students has been created in Phil's memory. Phil's own high school and college education was itself financed by a combination of scholarships and his own vacation work, and he was always supportive of scholarships for students in need. Contributions should be sent to the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G1. Cheques in Canadian or US dollars should be made out to "University of Waterloo—in memory of M.P. Bryden". Payment may also be made by VISA or MasterCard, and the letter should state that the donation is in memory of Dr M.P. Bryden, and must clearly indicate the amount, the card number, the card expiry date, the name on the card, and the complete address to which the card is normally sent, along with a signature.

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¹This bibliography is as complete as we have been able to make it, omitting only unrefereed conference abstracts. We would be grateful if we could be informed of any omissions. We are also aware that Phil was also actively collaborating with a number of researchers at the time of his death and we anticipate that other publications are still to appear, some probably in the pages of this journal.

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