

ALAN MAUDE, DCL

Mr Chancellor,

Sick people go to hospital where doctors and nurses make them better. Everybody knows that. Ask any child. But a hospital is much more complicated. A large teaching hospital like the RVI has a staff which runs into thousands. Clinical scientists, physiotherapists, pharmacists, psychologists, managers, radiographers, porters, cooks; the list goes on and on. Making people better is a team effort. And we don't always succeed. Contrary to a growing perception in some quarters, death is not optional. We all die and more and more of us die in hospital. For others, hospital is a place where they must face the loss of loved ones or, sometimes even worse, watch those most close survive the loss of their independence and even their consciousness. In over thirty years as a doctor at the RVI, at times like this I, like my colleagues, would look to another key member of the staff, Alan Maude, our chaplain.

Alan was appointed Chaplain at the RVI in 1975 and retired in August of this year. Throughout those years, Alan was a part of everyone's image of the hospital. Whether helping a grieving mother or standing in the long corridor chatting with staff, he was an ever present character. Most will be surprised that his life journey was long and varied before his arrival in Newcastle. Born in 1941 in Lancashire he left school with 2 O levels and little ambition. He dabbled in a variety of possible careers including a job in a bank before becoming a medical laboratory technologist in Crumpsall Hospital, Manchester. He specialised in microbiology and worked for the Public Health Laboratory Service. After 10 years Alan became a Christian and was successful in his application to be trained as a Church of England Minister. During 4 years as a curate in Rochdale he studied for an Archbishop's diploma in theology which was awarded in 1970. He moved to become Assistant Chaplain back at Crumpsall Hospital before moving to the RVI.

Alan contributed to the evolution of the post through three decades of dramatic change. He developed the role in paediatrics, in oncology and in maternity care. He addressed the need to better manage the grief of parents whose child was stillborn or who had faced medical termination for a serious malformation. His tenure has seen great structural change from closure of the Babies Hospital, Princess Mary and Fleming hospitals and construction of the Leazes wing to merger into the Newcastle Hospitals NHS Trust.

In 1988 he became an honorary canon of Newcastle Cathedral and in 1990 was awarded a Master of Science degree for his thesis on Pastoral Care in the Paediatric Unit, a long way from those 2 O levels. This academic recognition reflected Alan's gifts. He has an abundance of what is sometimes called emotional intelligence but also demonstrated in his belated studies an excellent analytical mind.

A better measure of Alan's stature than certificates and qualifications is the sheer number of funerals he has led.

Families gravitated to him because of his empathy. He embraced all faiths and creeds. He provided a spiritual anchor for people who increasingly struggle to cope with loss in a secular world. He recognised the need for better facilities for relatives to be with their loved ones and persuaded management to construct the viewing chapel near Pathology.

Alan has faced his own challenges. With 9 marathons under his belt, his love of running was curtailed by severe hip problems. Undeterred he took to his bicycle and graced us with his fluorescent Lycra. Alan and Marjorie, his wife of 38 years, faced a far greater stress 2 years ago when Rachel, one of their three children, was killed in a road traffic accident. They were supported by their faith and the outpouring of love and support from friends, relatives and colleagues who filled the aisles of Holy Trinity.

Mr Chancellor, Alan Maude personifies the host of unsung heroes who have made the RVI so special over the last century.

He has never pretended to be other than an ordinary man with failings like any other. He never, for example, embraced Newcastle United but remained a follower of Man U. The staff of the RVI have forgiven him for this and any other little flaws. He occupies a special place in their hearts.

There has been recent renewed debate about whether Neil Armstrong got his lines right when he set foot on the moon or whether he left out a word. I'd like to further abbreviate his famous phrase thus, as I invite you, Mr Chancellor to make Alan Maude a Doctor of Civil Law honoris causa;
One small man, one giant for mankind.

Citation by Professor John Burn