

## OBITUARY

### Mannie Stein, 1920 - 2014

Mannie Stein was born in Lithuania a few days after Pesach (Passover), but as no exact records were kept, he celebrated his birthday on 1 April. Although the worst of the pogroms were over, there was still overt anti-Semitism and great economic hardship and many Jews emigrated. Emigration papers were



hard to come by, but a brother of Mannie's mother, Sam Hackner, had emigrated earlier and sponsored the family. At the age of six Mannie set sail from Hamburg with his mother, his older brother Morris, and Hymie aged one. They arrived in Durban to join Mannie's father, who had preceded them six months earlier and started a small eatery.

Mannie matriculated at Durban High School at the age of 16 with distinctions in Mathematics and Latin. He studied medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand, graduating in 1942. In 1945 he married Lola Jankelson, with whom he had three children, Michael, David and Linda. After graduating he obtained his FRCS in Edinburgh. He spent a year at the Rotunda in Dublin, where he acquired his Diploma in Gynaecology and Obstetrics and a DA in anaesthesiology. All in all he spent 11 years doing surgical registrarships and a stint in general practice as required by the South African Council to be registered as a specialist surgeon.

Mannie opened a surgical practice in 1953 and shared rooms with Barry Adams, who became the first Professor of Medicine at the newly established medical school in Durban. By his sheer competence, ability and work ethic he built up a thriving practice. His workload became so heavy that he invited me to join him in partnership, which I did in 1960. Up to that point I had only come under his influence when he gave teaching ward rounds and lectures to medical students.

Mannie's rapid rise to become the best and busiest surgeon in Durban was greeted with resentment by the old Durban families, and as his partner I was subjected to the same discrimination. Like me he was nurtured by the two leading surgeons at that time, Aubrey Radford and Lawrence V Pearson. In 1963 Harold Duncan joined the practice and introduced a breath of fresh air from Pretoria.

Once the practice was firmly established, Mannie took long breaks. He visited Profs Rob and Eastcott at St Mary's, Prof. Milnes

Walker in Bristol, Drs Moore and Linton in Boston and Drs de Bakey and Cooley in Houston, and brought back his new knowledge to widen the scope of the practice. Enthused by this knowledge, he established a large vascular practice. He did the first repair of aortic aneurysms, bypasses, peripheral bypasses and carotid endarterectomies in Durban. He was very adept at portocaval shunts, although we knew little about hepatic encephalopathy at that time.

When thinking of Mannie, the following attributes come to my mind.

His technical excellence and high work ethic.

His insistence on punctuality. If an operation was scheduled for 7.30 a.m., that was cutting time and if the anaesthetist, assistant and theatre staff were late they were left in no doubt about his displeasure.

He had excellent surgical judgement. In the days before computed tomography scans and magnetic resonance imaging, he had an intuitive ability to know whether a postoperative problem could be treated conservatively or required a re-look operation.

He was the epitome of the old surgical adage 'The good doctor knows when to operate and to do so decisively, and the very good doctor knows when not to operate and stay his hand.'

He was bold and decisive. I am not sure whether the title of his autobiography, *Mindful of a Miracle*, relates to a particular patient, Rev. Yule. Dr Jack Rossiter, Yule's physician, had phoned Mannie to tell him that the Reverend had collapsed with a ruptured aortic aneurysm. Mannie arranged his admission to St Augustine's Hospital. He was taken straight to the operating theatre, and to all intents and purposes was dead: no pulse, no recordable blood pressure, and no easy venous access. Mannie opened the abdomen, rapidly isolated the aorta, and then took the blood transfusion being held by the startled physician and plunged it into the vena cava. Four units of blood were rapidly infused, and the pulse and BP returned. A stained glass window in the church commemorates this surgical feat.

His compassion, dedicated after-care and generosity. My wife and I were taken into his family, and we became not only partners but good friends. I learnt a great deal from him.

In Mannie's autobiography there is a foreword by the Editor of the *Canadian Jewish News*, Moredchai Ben Dal, in which he quotes the American writer and philosopher Ralph Emerson: 'There is properly no history, only biography'. Had Emerson known Mannie Stein he would have been doubly pleased, at the acquaintanceship with so rare an individual and that this aphorism could be so splendidly affirmed.

Mannie retired at the age of 65, and after a short stay in Israel moved to Toronto where his two sons had established themselves. Although he became increasingly frail, he retained his cognitive abilities and regularly did Sudoko and played bridge. In his 93rd year he became more and more tired, and eventually passed away.

We extend our sympathies to Michael, David and Linda, and their spouses and children. Mannie will be sorely missed by the Jewish community, the medical fraternity and his friends.

**Roy O Wise**

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