

Obituary

Gerard Mage

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Maurice-Antoine BRUHAT left this world suddenly on 25 February, leaving us, his pupils, with the feeling that we have lost a father. We all know what a brilliant career he had, but few indeed got to know the very private person that I had the fortune to work with every day for nearly 40 years, and this is the man I want to describe for you. It is not often that we are that lucky to meet an exceptional person whose charisma immediately strikes us, someone really outstanding. It may happen once, exceptionally more... Maurice-Antoine BRUHAT was one of those people who leave their mark on you and impress you by their approach to life.

He came to the “Polyclinique” with just two young interns back at the beginning of 1976. A mere 15 years later, his

department was famous all over the world. The team he built around himself and Hubert Manhes received visitors from all continents.

Maurice-Antoine BRUHAT had three great qualities among others—energy, courage and deep humanity. He knew how to transmit his energy and optimism to all those who worked with him, whatever their job. In his eyes, nothing was really difficult, and certainly not impossible. His ability to persuade ensured we all gave the best we possibly could.

He was sometimes incredibly courageous, while not letting anyone see it. I would like to give two examples: when we were just starting laparoscopic treatment for ectopic pregnancy, which at the time seemed temerarious if not preposterous, the major specialists at the time advised him to stop this dangerous method of surgery that was sure to come to nothing! He took care not to let any of us know. Later on, after presenting the laparoscopic treatment of ovarian cysts at the Institut Gustave Roussy, the head of this prestigious establishment called him in to tell him never to cross the Institute’s doorstep. We only got to hear about this many years later. He kept the difficulties to himself, protecting us and encouraging us to continue with this surgery in which he had so much faith.

Maurice was deeply human, and the best example is the traditional departmental party held at the end of each year, whilst avoiding making it an anniversary for fear someone would congratulate him. All the staff were invited, and before we started our festive meal he would give a speech in two parts—in the first, he told us we had all done well but that we could have done better, and, in the second, he announced that we were at a crucial point for the coming year and that we had to take great care to avoid spoiling everything we had achieved up till then. Next on the programme were the eagerly-awaited skits, for which we were fortunate to have

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excellent film-making facilities and superb actors, not least among whom were Arnaud Wattiez and Jean-Luc Pouly.

I really must share with you a few of his favourite sayings which coloured our day-to-day life at his side:

- To those faced with a difficult choice to make, he would say: “Never make a permanent decision to settle a temporary problem”
- To those who thought they had achieved something outstanding: “You did your duty, your whole duty, but nothing more than your duty”
- To those expressing doubts about something difficult: “You don't need hope to start something, nor success to persevere”.

I often met him in the morning at the Centre International de Chirurgie Endoscopique and to the customary "Good morning sir, how are you?" he would reply: “Very well thank you, why ever think otherwise!” and his parting words would be “Goodbye and especially keep up the good work”.

Dear Maurice, you will be sorely missed.