



IN MEMORIAM

Frank Tardrew Falkner
Professor of Maternal and Child Health, Emeritus
Berkeley
1918—2003

Frank Tardrew Falkner, Professor Emeritus of Maternal and Child Health in the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley, and an internationally recognized leader in the field of pediatric growth and development, died in his sleep at his Berkeley home on August 21, 2003, at the age of 84. Known by his friends and colleagues as the consummate British gentleman, Frank left an impact in fields as disparate as child health research and professional auto racing.

Born in Hale- Cheshire, England on October 27, 1918, Frank received his medical education in the midst of World War II. Unable to join the frontline because a childhood bout with polio left a lingering stiffness in his leg, Frank received his clinical training at two London hospitals during the Nazi blitz on the city. He received his medical degree from the University of Cambridge in 1945, the year the war ended.

His career in the United States began in 1956 when he joined the faculty of the University of Louisville School of Medicine in Kentucky, where he was one of the first researchers to study twins in the evaluation of genetic versus environmental influences on growth.

Twelve years later, he became program director and then associate director at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. In 1970 he joined the Fels Research Institute to direct the Fels Longitudinal Study of Physical Growth and Development. For years physicians have used data from that study to monitor children's physical growth.

Before joining the faculty of the University of California in 1981, Frank held faculty positions at Georgetown University, the University of Cincinnati, and the University of Michigan. During his tenure at UC Berkeley and the University of California, San Francisco, he helped form the Joint Health and Medical Sciences Program that spanned the two campuses.

While at UC Berkeley, he collaborated with Professor Zak Sabry on a longitudinal study of heart disease risk factors, including the development of obesity and high blood pressure, among white and black female adolescents. He also served as chair of the former Department of Social and Administrative Health Sciences from 1983 to 1987, and of the Maternal and Child Health Program from 1981 until retirement in 1989. Frank was admired for his ability to bring people together and was respected as a mediator who sought common ground and stressed that it was more important to agree on some points than disagree on many.

However, Frank's achievements stretched beyond academia. He was also an accomplished musician and had considered becoming a concert pianist before opting for a career in medicine. He composed music for and performed in the world- famous Cambridge University Footlights Dramatic Club. After suffering a debilitating stroke in 1998, Frank played the piano as a form of therapy.

In addition, Frank was an avid race car enthusiast and a member of the British Racing Drivers' Club, traveling to all corners of the world to attend races and even serving as unofficial "team doctor" for several giants in the field. Among his friends were Ken Tyrrell, founder of the Tyrrell Racing Formula One Team, and John Cooper, founder of the Cooper Car Company. These connections helped him launch the career of race car champion, Danny Sullivan, who was a childhood friend of Falkner's son, Michael. Sullivan went on to win the Indianapolis 500 in 1985 and the 1988 Championship Auto Racing Teams championship. One week before Frank's death, Sullivan carried Falkner from his house into the passenger seat of a new Porsche and gave the racing enthusiast one last ride around the block.

At the time of his death, Frank was survived by his daughter, Sally Letzer, of Calabasas, California; son, Michael Falkner, of Wiernsheim- Pinache, Germany; and two grandchildren. His former wife, June Dixon Falkner, died in 2000.

Jeffrey B. Gould
Sylvia D. Guendelman
C. Jean Morton
Zak Sabry