

Obituary: Dr. Graham G. Farrant Pioneer in Pre- and Perinatal Psychology

With great sadness, I assume the daunting task of summarizing the gifts and achievements of Graham Farrant who, at age 60, died in Melbourne, Australia on December 28.

I first met Graham in Australia in 1983, when after only a telephone conversation he was able to state that I was “born in one contraction” (my mother’s actual words). From our subsequent meeting, I became deeply impressed with his intuition and empathy, and later returned to re-experience my own pre- and perinatal events under his guidance. (These experiences have been described in my 1993 book, *Primal Connections*.)

It was characteristic of Graham’s humble opinion of himself that when I suggested that he should present his accumulating evidence of prenatal memories in the USA, he replied, “But what would I have to tell them in America?” I encouraged him to shake off this colonial mentality, and thanks to David Chamberlain and Mary Davenport, he was invited to speak at the PPPANA Congress of 1985 in San Diego. Graham’s unique contribution to pre- and perinatal psychology was in the realm of early prenatal memories, going back further than anyone before him to egg and sperm. After his first appearance in the USA, he received a standing ovation which moved him beyond words. (This presentation, *Dancing to Life: Conception Revisited*, was a split-screen documentary of his reliving his own conception in parallel with the events in Lennart Nilsson’s *Miracle of Life*.) “I felt so happy in San Diego to be with a group of people who allowed me to talk about cellular consciousness” he enthused.

A charismatic visionary, Graham’s popularity spread and he took on an exhausting schedule of workshops in the USA and Europe. Many people, whose lives were turned around in sessions with him followed up with further therapy at his clinic in Melbourne. At the end of 1989, Graham ended his practice there to share his talents internationally and he became a “regular” at Esalen, IPA, PPPANA, and ISPPM until his retirement and failing health in 1991. His final presentation was a plenary session at the PPPANA conference in Atlanta in 1991, “The Agony and Ecstasy of Ensoulment”.

Graham graduated as a physician from the University of Melbourne in 1956. He was the first Australian to gain both Adult and Child Psychiatric Postgraduate diplomas in North America, from McGill University and Harvard University respectively. Also, he held the inaugural position of Consultant Child Psychiatrist at the Queen Victoria Hospital-Monash University Medical Center, now famous for its IVF program. Graham experienced his first primal regres-

sion, spontaneously, when his father collapsed (and he died at the same hour of his father's death.) On the advice of one of his patients, Graham resigned his university and hospital appointments in 1973 to begin primal therapy, first with Arthur Janov and later with Jules Roth in Denver.

He returned to Australia in 1975 and devoted himself to facilitating deep regressive experiences in his clients, while weathering scorn and derision from his medical colleagues. Graham never ceased probing his own depths, which had begun with the reliving of his birth asphyxia, nuchal cord, and an early abortion attempt. This commitment to owning his own pain was the foundation of his accessibility, a profound humanity that was an inspiration and a comfort to so many.

Graham was the father of four children, a fact that he liked to put before his academic and professional achievements on any biographical profile. He was the first to introduce Leboyer's approach to newborns in Australia. As well, he created the Australian Birth Foundation and organized a *Birth and Being Congress* in Melbourne in 1979. "The planned conception between two people in love is the cornerstone of holistic health," he often remarked.

Graham had wonderful sense of humor and ability to mimic people. Groups readily gathered around him to roar at his anecdotes. He constantly laughed at himself. After his high blood pressure and heart condition led to the need for a pacemaker, he joked, "I exist regulated by my cardiologist's laptop computer!" His unfettered mind and open heart entertained all possibilities: he believed that the body never lied. He was a skillful facilitator eliciting responses and insights in his patients that would have taken ordinary therapists years. Attuned to every nuance, gesture, metaphor, he resisted giving answers, explaining: "I wouldn't want to rob you of the experience of discovering that for yourself!" He was a doer, not a writer, but luckily his many videotapes have captured the essence of his innovative work.

The evidence that unfurled with his patients' primal journeys led him to new psychiatric insights such as the "blighted (vanishing) twin syndrome". His spiritual evolvment was influenced by Sai Baba whose ashram in India he visited on several occasions (despite depleting bouts of dysentery).

Graham's deepest conviction was the people search for their own divinity, which he knew could be tapped only through compassionate listening and unconditional love. He believed that

breaking down human conflict and barriers begin with our cell membranes and extend to national boundaries. Political power must cease emerging from the barrel of a gun. First, the Fallopian tube, then the birth canal, are the barrels through which our minds are launched. The twists, turns and tactics learned there project into the theater of politics, first as dress rehearsals with our families and then recapitulating in the world at large.

Graham's untimely death is a tragic loss that will long be mourned.

Elizabeth Noble