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Remembering John Norman Draper, 1955-1994

John Norman Draper died in Canberra on Monday September 26, 1994, two days before the Australian Anthropological Society AGM, held in Sydney. Even if well, this is a conference John probably would not have attended, for in recent years he had been engaged in several aid projects in Vietnam, where he lived with his wife Laurie Zivetz and their children Sion, aged twelve, and Sara, aged seven.

In mid-June, suffering acutely from metastatic melanoma, John returned to Australia from Vietnam, with his family. Although it seemed that John's death was imminent at that time, his condition stabilised and health improved somewhat, enabling him to leave the hospice in Sydney and return to his home in Canberra, where he had lived previously, and where his parents and brother live also. In this period of three months, a gift of life in the face of death, John was able to complete several aspects of his life here in Australia, both personal and academic. Friendships (such as mine with him), limited by spatial proximity to occasional correspondences by letter, were renewed and revitalised and, when feeling reasonably strong, John also completely revised his doctoral dissertation "Beyond Medicine: Sickness, Healing and Order in Sherpa Society," which was submitted to the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, shortly after his death. John was forced by his illness and his appreciation of how little time he had left to bring his dissertation to a form with which he was at least content, so that it would be available to others. He joked that without this situation, he would probably never have revised it to his satisfaction. The degree was subsequently awarded with high commendation and a recommendation that it should be published as a book. This will hopefully be brought to fruition in the not too distant future.

John began his Ph.D. research in late 1985, under the supervision of Michael Allen, conducting his fieldwork with the Sherpa people from the village of Thame in Nepal. It was here he met Laurie, then a development consultant studying entrepreneurship, and her young son, Sion. In 1986, Laurie and John collaborated with a Sherpa artist, Lama Zangbu, from Thame Gonpa, producing a small book, *The Yetis: a Sherpa Story for Kids*, the proceeds of which assisted in the purchase of books and materials for the Thame School. This small project showed new directions John's life was taking. In 1987, John returned with his new family to Sydney for Sara's birth, later moving to Canberra. While writing his dissertation, John cared for Sara while Laurie continued her work; both balanced family and work in a partnership of considerable depth and intensity.

Since returning with his family to Hanoi in 1991, when Laurie took up her position as Director of CARE, Australia, John had been busy with a variety of projects, seeking to bring tangible assistance and relief to the suffering of Third World peoples, and his thesis consequently received sporadic attention during this period. Prior to his departure from Vietnam, John worked for eight months as a training adviser for the Ministry of Health, under contract with the Swedish Government's SIDA (Swedish International Development Association). Prior to this he consulted for a variety of NGOs, the Integrated Pest Management Program, and also AIDAB in Vietnam. He also served as Chairman of the Board of the International School in Hanoi, where his children continue their education.

He is well remembered by the people there for his training in participatory rural appraisal, which represented his general approach to development. John had become involved in development work in Canberra, initially as a health adviser for AIDAB, and then as a Country Program Manager in the Philippines, thereby combining several of his interests in a career path which furthered his deep interest in other peoples and cultures.

John was born on May 4, 1955, at Bayer River, Western Highlands Province, PNG. As a young boy he accompanied his parents into the frontier regions of West Baliem, Tiom, Irian Jaya and Maprik, East Sepik Province, undertaking his early education through correspondence with Aiyura Primary School, Eastern Highlands Province. He began his secondary education at Ukurumpa High School, EHP, and completed it at Carey Grammar School, Kew, Victoria, before undertaking an honours degree in political science at the University of Melbourne.

While at school, John developed a strong interest in music, playing the flute, guitar and marimba. Despite his natural talent and career prospects in music, John decided to follow another path. After completing his undergraduate studies, he traveled extensively, exploring the horizons of the Himalayas, which became one of the great passions of his life, before taking up a position with the Kuring-gai Council, in Sydney's north, as Youth and Recreation Officer. In 1981 John moved to Canberra, teaching at the Bruce TAFE in their work skills program, and at the then Canberra College of Advanced Education in the health education course.

John began his encounter with anthropology in 1984, completing his MA thesis "Transcendence and Pragmatism: A Study of the Sherpa Religion," by library research in May 1985, from the Faculties, Australian National University, supervised by Chris Gregory and Caroline Ifeka. I met him during this period, not long after my return from fieldwork in the Western Himalaya, and we shared many hours exploring our mutual love of the Himalayas and the people who live there, and arguing about anthropological and other theoretical constructs.

Anyone who had the opportunity to engage in such a dialogue with John will well remember his energy and enthusiasm, as well as the edge of urgency which seemed to permeate his thought. He wanted not only to think about things, but to do—to change and to participate totally. His life in many ways exemplified the union of the active compassion learnt from his deep Christian upbringing, with similar spiritual values and wisdom encountered in Tibetan Buddhism, the religion of the Sherpa, an interesting and complex mix which he lived, and brought to a personal resolution and synthesis in the final months of his life.

John designed his memorial service, which was conducted in one of the function rooms at the National Gallery, overlooking Lake Burely Griffin, on Saturday October 1, with the carillon sounding the hours, and the sharing of memories and friendships, meditations and candles, music and food.

Elizabeth Stutchbury

Himalayan Research Bulletin thanks Elizabeth Stutchbury for sharing this memorial piece with our readers; an earlier version appeared in the *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1994.