# Some of you will have known Martin for longer than I have: I have only known him for just over 40 years – That’s a very long time - not quite my whole life, although it sometimes feels like that!

# Others of you will have known him personally, or through College, and some from the heady days of the Marshall lab – Ginny Papaioannou, Azim Surani, Brenda Mayo and of course Richard Gardner.

# Really it was here in Physiology that Martin’s career in Reproduction was forged. Undertaking research with Bob Edwards and others funded by the Ford Foundation, must have been an exciting stimulating environment, where close friendships were made, and successful careers started from discussions in the tea-room.

# Bob’s first two PhD students were particularly special to him and remained so for his whole life – Martin and Richard - each would each eventually make their international marks from both Cambridge and Oxford, albeit that no one would consider them two peas in a pod, although they called each other Beans. It is indeed sad that Richard could not be here today due to family commitments - - but as at all the best celebrations he has sent a telegram!, which I should like to read out to you.

**From one ‘Old Bean’ to another slightly younger ‘Old Bean’**.

Given our disparity in height I should perhaps be classified as a ‘dwarf French bean’ and you ‘the scarlet runner’. Regardless, I am very sorry not to be able to be with you on your very special day. ‘Inside-outside’ seems a wholly appropriate name for the occasion given the way you managed, through very elegant experiments, to provide a mechanistic basis for Tarkowski and Wroblewska’s 1967 hypothesis on the initial diversification of blastomeres.

I often remember Cambridge research-student days with great affection. How a jar labelled ‘*right testicle for Dr Edwards’* - that appeared on his desk one morning was soon decorated with a note saying ‘*been in the wars old chap?’*. I cannot claim categorically you were the author of the note but, given the things you got up to, it is not improbable that you were.

I also remember us serving drinks at the leaving doo for Alan Parkes when his wife, Ruth Deansely complained to us bitterly that the girl she had spent months training as a histologist had got herself pregnant, and as good as accused you of being the culprit. Oh, what heady days. I suspect research now students take life rather more seriously!

In a letter I received from Roger Short many years ago, he raised the question whether FRS stood for ‘friends of the right sort’, or ‘further research suspended’. Given the challenges of obtaining funding, particularly for interdisciplinary work, I very much hope that in your case it will stand for ‘future research secured’.

With very best wishes for your special day.

From Older Bean

My own dealings with Martin came later, in 1974 when I arrived as a rather naïve South African medic who came to the wonderful anatomy department in Cambridge, to work on Dolphin Vision
– those in the know, realized this was a professorial con trick – as I soon found out - there weren’t any dolphins in the anatomy department and some may say no vision either!, but the department did need medics to work in the DR – research was a minor issue in those days in that department.

I soon realized that the anatomy department into which Martin had moved as a lecturer was very anatomically laid out

* Brains at the top (neuroscience and behaviour with Jo and Barrys
* Second floor: Heart and teratology of other organs (Viz Navaratnam, Gill Morriss, Pat Collins and David Woollam
* First Floor: Reproduction and early development (newsly arrived Martin Johnson and Matt Kaufman)
* Ground floor, which some regarded as the rectal area were the old guard – formal former medics, teachers of gross anatomy, with remarkable ability with chalk and blackboard, but who never bothered with research – indeed in some ways they were more allied to the occupants of the basement – which was the DR.
* They regarded the non-medical team on the first floor with suspicion and disdain – and called them the T-shirt brigade.

The T-shirt brigade started small, - one technician Debbie Eager, and one PhD student Alan Handyside and later myself, rescued from my ignominious career with bottles of dolphin eyes, by the advice of Jo and Barry and the kindness and generosity of Martin, who offered to take me on as a PhD student and see whether there was anything I was interested in.

Indeed kindness, caring, support, innovation, stimulation and modesty despite prodigious knowledge, are all words which I believe describe Martin best.

One of the transfers that also made the move from Physiology to Anatomy was Brenda. Perhaps I can explain: Brenda Mayo was laboratory assistant in the Marshall Lab, who meticulously recorded all the recipes for making media and other necessary embryological cocktails in a red hard covered exercise book on which she wrote her name in big letters – BRENDA.

Now it isn’t clear to me how it made its way over to Anatomy but the book became an essential part of the lab equipment. This was a source of constant consternation for new part II and graduate students: – When they enquired how to do something particular in the lab, or make up some ingredient or medium, the answer was as invariable as it was obscure – go and look in Brenda.

When eventually a new clinical lab was started at Addenbrooke’s and then the Rosie – a new red hardcover book was started with all that was needed in that embryo lab. This of course was called Brenda’s sister – and the whole cycle of perplexed students started afresh.

Martin’s attitude to PhD supervision was - the Sink or Swim approach – he threw out the bone of an idea, and then it was up to you as to how you would pursue it. And his approach to the editing of our writing efforts is legendary – and really hasn’t changed in his more senior professional editorial role.
We gave ourselves a Gold Star if we had just one paragraph without blood all over it from his red pen – His own style, reflected in the corrections, we called *Johnsonian High Gothic*, to which his later students Ginny Bolton, John Reeve and his part II students will attest. Even Postdoctoral Fellows did not escape the pen as I’m sure Hester Goddard and Tom Fleming will remember.

But the more important thing that he dished out in spades, was support – an attribute that pervades Martin’s career.

Martin’s attitude to **students** was always generous and stimulating. He started a very successful Part II course in reproduction and embryology that seemed to attract intelligent if unusual students:

Their projects were integral to the lab and almost all eventually had significant papers to their names. But although bright they did tried Martin’s patience at times.

Some you them who are here will remember when they started *The Calypso Club* – a Bacchanalian gathering wholly dedicated to the design of new cocktails, with significant R&D taking place on Sunday nights.
Not surprisingly Mondays in the lab were dreadful – in vitro eggs and morulae were blown all over the dishes by shaky pipettes held in trembling hands. It might also have been the breath from the mouth pipettes that was the last straw for the poor cells.

And **Martin’s generosity** did not stop at undergraduate students – when Hugh Pelham and I eventually succeeded at translating mRNA from mouse eggs, and sent a paper to Nature, he insisted that his name did not appear, NOT because he didn’t trust the work,– BUT in case people thought that the work was his, despite the fact that the concept in principle was. How few of us would deliberately leave our name off a game-changing Nature paper of one of our graduate students to foster their success?

MHJs attitude to research, was always generous, far-sighted and inclusive.

He was always an early adopter, always keen to work with any one who had a new and different idea – with JVB 2D gels, Michael Edidin and laser scanning for membrane diffusion, the role of the genome on early events which sent me off to develop techniques with Tim Hunt and Hugh Pelham, and perhaps his most important work using immunostaining with Carol Ziomek, Bernard Maro and Caroline Vincent, leading to novel ideas about early cell allocation providing the strapline for this meeting - inside or out.

The international clinical success of IVF and the birth of Louise Brown was a turning point for Martin and mine too. It was clear that much of the science developed on mouse needed to be confirmed or at least explored on human eggs and embryos, and for that, one of us needed to be clinically credible to gain access.

Together we were able to get one of the very first grants to work on fertilisation of human oocytes donated by women undergoing laparoscopic sterilization, and later two programme grants to continue exploring many aspects of preimplantation development which had been shown in mouse but were lacking in the human.

And it was during this time (1885) that Martin’s remarkable perceptiveness came to the fore again in noticing the stealthy emergence of Enoch Powell’s Unborn Children (Protection) bill – a private members bill that if adopted into law, would for the first time, ensure that a grant which had been provided by the MRC would be outlawed retrospectively.
On a Wednesday we wrote a letter to Sir James Gowans, secretary of the MRC pointing this out, and asking why the MRC wasn’t doing anything about opposing it. An ominous call was received the next day from head office – ‘SJG wishes to see you first thing tomorrow’. On the Friday we went down in some trepidation, and were astounded. Instead of receiving a reprimand at our impudence, we were offered any help we wanted from the MRC to mount a campaign – that was the birth of the Professional Advisory Group on Infertility and Genetic Services (PAGIGS) which provided prodigious amounts of help to MPs opposing the bill, and led to the formation of the campaign group Progress, which is still educationally successful and influential today as the Progress Educational Trust.

These events in which he was so instrumental were probably the start of Martin’s interest and involvement in the social politics of human reproduction in this country; to his early and valued stint on the newly formed HFEA, and later his involvement and writing about reproductive biomedicine and society, and his most recent establishment and editorship of a new journal with Sarah Franklin.

In all of these dealings the one fact that is patently clear - is the **apparent absence or public profile of the main protagonist** -

Martin has always been a backroom person, coming up with and fostering ideas, nourishing them and allowing, or nay, pushing others to take the limelight and usually the kudos.

Because of this, his own contributions took time to be recognized by many of the prestigious medical and science institutions in this country, albeit that he was recognised and lauded in other parts of Europe and in the US. He finally, albeit belatedly, received the accolades of FMedSci, FRCOG and eventually last year FRS which he so deserved but which should have appeared much earlier.

Although never pushing himself forward, he showed enormous caring for others by putting them up for various awards. This attitude was shown to the full with his old mentor, as Bob’s daughter Jenny Joy will attest. With others he fought to try and get Bob recognized by the Nobel and Lasker committees - the latter of which recognized him much earlier while he was well enough to enjoy the prestige.

When it was clear that Bob was deteriorating although he had finally received the recognition in his well deserved Nobel prize, it was Martin who ensured that he had a voice at the Nobel ceremony, presenting a wonderful history in his stead at the behest of Bob’s family, which had been so dear to him. And now with Kay Elder, using Bob and Jean Purdy’s lab notebooks, he has produced the full and fascinating account of what happened at the very beginning of the IVF story.

And as you are aware the journey didn’t stop there - he has continued to be a quiet motivator, attracting lawyers, ethicists and social scientists as we have heard today, to become involved with him on exploring many other fascinating areas of assisted human reproduction and its social repercussions.

Martin, those of us who know you, really appreciate what you have done and achieved internationally, and personally for so many. If you have any doubts, - look around this hall at all those who have come from near and far, to celebrate, and to say thank you.