

David Berry – Media Analyst and Early British Futurist



I first met David Berry through the World Future Society (WFS). Although an American organisation based in Washington it had a London-based chapter during the 1970s. David was part of that group. He'd started heading across the Atlantic for WFS meetings several years earlier. So when we first met in the late 1970s he was already on speaking terms with some of the leading futurists of the time. Not only that - he also had links with the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) and many of its leading people. David was therefore the first British person I knew with a broad, international view based on personal knowledge and a very wide network of forward-looking people.

David had a tall, athletic build and a classically good-looking countenance. He was a keen runner and always seemed very fit. But he was also quietly spoken and gentle in his demeanour. He was widely read and had a degree in communication theory. I went down to London to hear Ed Cornish (then WFS President) speak and we soon became good friends. I was welcomed into his home in Bromley, Kent, by his first wife, Paula, and their two young daughters. Then while I was hard at work on my PhD, and my own wife and two young sons had gone to stay with family overseas for the summer, David visited our small terraced house in the tiny Lancashire village of Calder Vale.

On another occasion David and I sat next to each other and chatted throughout a long flight to the US for yet another conference. We always had a great deal to discuss and I was constantly impressed with the breadth of his reading and the depth of his understanding. Such people were, and perhaps still are, somewhat

rare in the UK where the past seems to hold sway over institutions and people. History loomed large in universities with many well-established departments but at the time nothing remotely similar concerning Futures could be found. Decades earlier H.G. Wells had complained of the very same past-oriented bias.

At one point David and I registered a business name: Futures Research Associates. But it was premature and we were also too inexperienced to know how to make it work. It fell over rather quickly but that did not affect our friendship. When I moved overseas in the late 1980s we stayed in touch and met up when we could. He and his second wife Pattie drove up to London for an event I took part in for a government department. We met again in Budapest in 2005 at the (WFSF) conference when I handed over the Presidency of that organisation to a French colleague.

Then in 2010 I was invited to give a keynote address at a conference in the UK. So I took the chance to catch up with family. My son, Rohan, took time off to drive us from Lancaster to Portsmouth and from there to Exeter for a final engagement. We stopped off in Ringwood, Hampshire, to see David and Pattie who looked happy and well. David had one of the most extensive Futures libraries anywhere, including a full set of back issues of *Futures* stretching back some 40 years! Now the library was located in an outbuilding within the grounds of their handsome country property. Rohan and I were treated to a memorable meal in a local restaurant set in a traditional thatched building on the main street. Later that year my book *The Biggest Wake-Up Call in History* was published and David later consented to write a review. It was a generous thing to do and as authentic as anyone could wish for. The review can still be seen on the Foresight International website.

I was shocked and surprised to hear that David was ill with Leukaemia. He passed away soon afterwards. Losing close friends who have shared key aspects of your life is never easy and I continue to miss him to this day.