Ray Ranson, MA, Fellow Royal Society of Health, July 1947–April 2000

Editorial Board Member Ray Ranson died suddenly in April. This obituary has been contributed by Louise Pankhurst, who was a close friend of Ray and his wife, Janet.

Ray Ranson was a senior environmental health officer who had friends and colleagues from many diverse fields including child accident prevention, counselling, housing, health promotion, lead and asbestos pollution, video production, education, training, and the media. He had an international reputation and published widely in health and housing and was a specialist consultant to the World Health Organisation (WHO), involved in fieldwork in shanty towns, developing guidelines for safety and health in housing, lecturing and presenting at international conferences and symposia. What linked these fields was Ray's passion for public health and public service and what can only be described as a desire to find innovative yet practical ways to improve the public's health. In his own words "I believe strongly in the preventive medicine approach to public health and in encouraging partnership arrangements between the community and decision making bodies". His chosen means of achieving this were through practical campaigns, information and health education.

Ray represented the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health on the Board of the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT). My first meeting with Ray was to plan a campaign about improving building regulations to prevent home accidents, particularly in temporary accommodation, multioccupied, tenanted accommodation, and poor housing. A series of booklets and leaflets followed but what

I learnt was just how much voluntary organisations like CAPT rely on access to the expertise and commitment of professionals from the field for the facts on which to base actions and make things happen. Ray's biography is a catalogue of such commitments.

Most of his working life was in Lambeth and most of the issues he tackled were those relevant to an inner city population, health and safety, healthy housing, sexual health, drug abuse, AIDS and children's day care. In all these areas Ray produced policy documents, guidelines and health promotion materials for local, national, and international bodies that are widely applied and used. WHO published *Housing Hygiene Guidelines* as part of their series on Environmental Health in Europe. Two booklets for European local authorities on child safety and healthy housing were also drafted. Many of the dozen or so videos that Ray created and promoted, such as *Child Safety is No Accident* and *Counselling and Sexuality*, won prestigious British Medical Association awards for educational merit and are widely used. Ray was working on a book on standards in children's day care when he died—Routledge hope to publish this posthumously.

While Honorary Public Relations Officer for the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, a post he held for five years, Ray initiated campaigns on lead and asbestos pollution, something he was particularly proud of, and which has indirectly contributed to the safety of children in the environment. He was a founder member of the Public Health Alliance and remained involved until his death, attending the 10th anniversary event just after leaving hospital.

It is hard to describe the man himself; he had so many qualities. It would have been impossible to have covered such a wide field of activities in such depth and have achieved so much in so short a time without being tenacious, knowledgeable, creative, resourceful, and driven by social injustice. Yet he was also relaxed and warm natured, a loving and sensitive father and husband with a spiritual side. What must be added to this description of a man of our time is his great fortitude in coping with the devastating illness and disability he endured for the last three years. Even in these almost impossible circumstances he continued to work and contribute to debates and argue his case. Sometimes there are gifts that arrive out of the blue and Ray found deep love and happiness in the last few years with Janet, his second wife. There was so much more Ray was prepared to do and as a friend and colleague I speak with regret for myself and others of that not to be fulfilled possibility.

LOUISE PANKHURST, OBE
Director, Child Accident Prevention Trust, 1987–95