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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I owe Elaine Cooper and Doug Sutton a considerable debt for their account of my old friend Ham Parker. Also to Nigel Prickett for his obituary. There was much I did not know. Ham and I talked of many things but his war experiences were not among them. The last time that I can recall meeting him was in the Auckland War Memorial Museum, where he was studying Egyptian papyri - certainly he was reading hieroglyphics. I had long known of his passion for Egyptology. He was then looking frail and seemed rather unwell.

Ham's view of Dr. H.D. Skinner as a lecturer differs from mine. I found Skinner a very stimulating lecturer - despite his horrible mis-pronunciation of Maori and Spanish. Dr. Skinner, like Ham himself, was a loveable person, and became a considerable friend.

I was among those who were disappointed when Ham failed to 'get in on' the Aswan Dam salvage project. He was an ideal person for the job.

I shared his love of poetry. Sometimes in the evening in our tent at Sarah's Gully, we would take it in turn to recite verse, as it came to our minds. Ham recited very well. "Don John of Austria was shouting to his ships!" rolled forth in Ham's beautiful modulated voice.

He had his little peculiarities. Even carefully cleaned bird skeletons were anathema to him. I had carefully to conceal any such that I had if Ham was a fellow occupant of a tent, for the usually mild-mannered Ham was far from pleased at the idea of sharing a tent with BONES!

Ham was a fine, very loveable chap, and New Zealand archaeology is the poorer for his passing. Incidentally, I coined the term 'Golson's Gang', and was abused by Jack for so doing.

Ron Scarlett, Canterbury Museum