

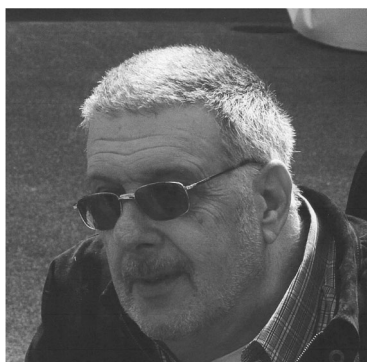


OBITUARY

Obituary—Mike Oliver (1945–2019) Emeritus Professor of Disability Studies

John Russell Silver¹

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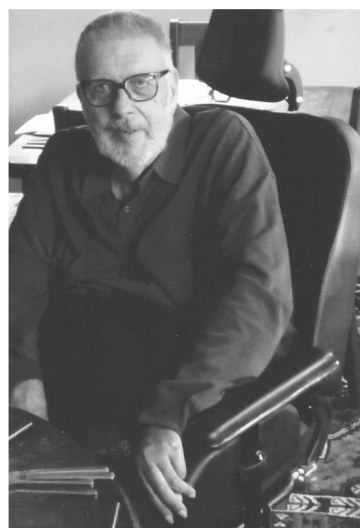


Mike Oliver sustained a spinal cord injury in 1964 at a time when mere survival was a challenge. However, Mike Oliver pursued academic studies and achieved A levels. After teaching literacy to young offenders at Borstal Prison, he was inspired to study again and took a Sociology degree course, graduating from the University of Kent in 1975. He went on to study for a Masters and a doctorate. Mike Oliver was a pioneer in the teaching of disability studies both at his alumni university and for the Open University and when he moved to the University of Greenwich, he was appointed the first Professor in Disability Studies in Britain. Among his acclaimed publications, *Social Work with Disabled People* (1983), *The Politics of Disablement* (1990) and *The New Politics of Disablement* (2012) have firmly established disability as an academic field and laid the foundations of the social model of disability. This model contends that the difficulties of living with a disability are not caused by the disability itself but are due to society's failure to adapt to the needs of disabled people. Mike Oliver achieved outstanding success as a mentor of students, as an author and as an advocate for independent living and civil rights for disabled people. He was responsible for teaching doctors,

students and patients the value and the right to independence. He was always positive, constructive and unassuming. He also convinced disabled people to view the discrimination that they faced daily as a matter of rights rather than as a personal tragedy from a medical problem. His advocacy for the independence of patients with spinal injuries served as a beacon for patients.

Mike Oliver co-authored an important book, *Walking into Darkness* (1988). At that time, while the medical treatment of patients with spinal injuries was good, very little was known about the eventual outcome. To this end, 137 patients, who had been treated at Stoke Mandeville Hospital between 1971 and 1984, were contacted and interviewed. The results were salutary. In total 20 patients had been lost to follow up and the patients were surprisingly critical of the treatment they received apart from the physiotherapy at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. The long term implications and consequences of this study were important and invaluable to professionals and patients alike.

Mike Oliver will be sadly missed and our thoughts are with his wife Joy.



✉ John Russell Silver
jrussellsilver@btconnect.com

¹ George House, High Street, Tring, Hertfordshire, UK