Beverly Mackenna has died at the age of 83. The youngest of three brothers, he was born in Glasgow and educated at Jordanhill College School, a renowned Glasgow school. He excelled on many fronts beyond the academic, including gymnastics and sport, becoming School Captain and achieving captancy of the first XV rugby team. He continued playing rugby for the school Former Pupils team at stand-off into his early thirties and was an enthusiastic golfer throughout life.

Once he had completed National Service, Bev studied medicine at Glasgow University. After graduating and completing his hospital internship, he was brought back to the Physiology Department in 1957 by the late Robert Campbell Garry whose infectious enthusiasm infused in Bev an interest in alimentary movement and the autonomic nervous system. He studied for a PhD on aspects of the latter, under the late John Gillespie, graduating in 1962. After this, he had a short post-doctoral period in the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm under Ulf von Euler, where he developed his interest in neurotransmitters. He became a Member of The Physiological Society in 1964. ‘Peristalsis in the rabbit distal colon’ was Beverly’s 1972 paper with his then PhD student, Hugh McKirdy (JPhysiol 220. 33–54), and was much quoted. Later, when he had developed an interest in oral physiology he published original work on the masseter reflex with Kemal Turker.

For many years Beverly played an important part in the education of Glasgow medical students. Later in his career he was in charge of the physiology course for dental students. Always calm and considerate, he was well-liked and respected by students. He had a great capacity for friendship, as testified by many students of his who kept in touch with him.

Beverly was a dedicated and inspirational teacher who, in unruffled manner, could devote extra instruction to interested undergraduates and generate insight for science, dental and medical students through the years. When in charge of physiology for dental students in later years, he developed a device and mechanism for measuring jaw muscle and bite strength.

For a number of years he examined for the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Glasgow and also of London and abroad, in 1990 he was made an honorary FRCP(Glasg).

Beverly’s passion for brevity and precision made him ideal to assume editorial revision of later editions of the very successful Illustrated Physiology (Churchill Livingstone), a gem of concise and accessible basic physiological information. Originally authored by the late Ann McNaught and the late Robin Callander in 1963, and after translation into many languages, later editions were extensively revised by Bev; the sixth edition of ‘Mackenna and Callander’ in 1997, two years after his retirement.

Beverly was a sociable and well-liked character who did not volunteer his views before consideration. Though reserved, his comments, when they did emerge, were thoughtful and incisive. He is survived by his wife Meg, his first love from school days, their daughter and grandchildren. A devoted family man, Beverly will be sorely missed by his wide range of friends, students and colleagues who knew and were influenced by him.

Hugh Elder