

LIVES REMEMBERED

Gabriel Irwin writes: I read with interest the obituary of **Mulk Raj Anand** (September 30). He was a friend of my father from the 1940s. They shared an interest in Indian art and culture and had similar political outlooks. As a teenager and young adult I met Mulk a number of times in the 1970s and early 1980s, in Bombay and London.

I recollect him as an immensely warm-hearted person. The first times we met he gave me a copy each of *Untouchable* and *Coolie* inscribed by "Uncle Mulk". During these years we had a sporadic correspondence. His letters were always beautifully written, funny and interesting. Sometimes he would gently chide if he thought one had taken a wrong decision. In one letter, written shortly after I finished university and moved to London to live in cheap

rented accommodation, he signed off as follows: "I don't understand why you should be in Leytonstone of all places in the great shabby Metropolis of London. I only concede to that suburb the remembrance of a gentle little girl Florrie, who typed a book for me for a very modest pay." His message, understated though it was, resonated. I left Leytonstone when I could.

Your obituary mentioned that E. M. Forster wrote the preface of *Untouchable*. In common with other intellectuals of his generation who pondered the relationship between Englishmen and Indians, Mulk often alluded to Forster's rather pessimistic view of the subject, though Mulk, with his zest for life, was more hopeful than Forster. In 1997 he wrote a delightful obituary of my father for the

Independent. Referring to my father's many Indian friendships, the final sentence read as follows: "In the new cultural life friendships could be realised between Indian and Englishmen not achieved in the earlier period of E. M. Forster and *A Passage to India*." From a person half of whose life was spent under the British Raj this was symptomatic of the positive spirit that no doubt sustained Mulk Raj Anand for such a long and fruitful life.

Oliver Gili writes: **Jonathan Gili** (obituary, October 5) was a great father. One who used to play me, as a child, inappropriate punk and new wave 7 inches. Blagged me on to the set of *Star Wars*. Took my sister for birthday teas at the Dorchester, and even took my little brother to see Arsenal play at

Highbury. (In his youth he was so uninterested in football that when he had to play in goal he used to take a book to read.)

Nicholas Waller writes: Your obituary of the astronaut **Gordon Cooper** (October 6) claimed that the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo manned programmes were "top-secret", when Nasa was in fact very public about them.

The obituary went on to say that *Apollo 10* was the first Moon landing (it was *Apollo 11*); that Cooper set a record with his 34-hour flight (the USSR, with Nikolayev, had already gone four days); and that by dozing while waiting for lift-off, Cooper became the first man to sleep in space (which was Titov on *Vostok 2* in 1961).

You also missed an intriguing end to Cooper's Nasa career. As back-up commander of *Apollo 10* he was in line to command the next mission but two, and so to walk on the Moon. He was bumped off (partly because of his love of racing cars) to make way for Alan Shepard, who returned to space flight after being grounded for medical reasons. As Shepard had been out of training for so long, his crew swapped with Lovell's *Apollo 14* crew to give him more time, but if all that hadn't happened, Cooper would have been the hero of *Apollo 13*.

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