

Tribute to Dr. Stephen M Drance OC, MD (1925 – 2020)

As his fellow, and then partner for 26 years, I found my reaction to losing him to be deep and with a myriad of memories to comfort me. I got to know him better than most through meetings, travels, but mostly in the clinic which we shared. I was in awe of him but, over time and with an appreciation of his many talents; my respect and affection grew and remains. Anyone who knew him must have also shared those feelings that came from noticing his knowledge, wit, humility, and wisdom. He once said to me, "we've lived in very interesting times"! He was right and I was beside this great man who was a world leader in his field, an orator who could debate anyone in his field – and win, an original thinker who wasn't formulaic in deriving solutions, an outstanding administrator, and a very kind gentleman who considered all aspects of problems in his daily life.

Born in Poland, educated in Scotland and England, and his career in Canada made for a multitasking personality. He immigrated to Saskatchewan and subsequently to British Columbia, where he was promoted to full Professor in 1966. Stephen's research began in Saskatchewan and continued until after retirement. It literally documents trends in our understanding of glaucoma, its etiologies, diagnostics, and its treatment over 50 years. He contributed to them all. His science and explanations of it were always carefully considered and plainly revealed.

His energies were inexhaustible as shown by contributions internationally, nationally, and at the local level. Notable are his initiation of a number of Societies including the Canadian Glaucoma, International Perimetric plus offices held in Canadian Ophthalmological Society, American Ophthalmological Society, ARVO, Pan-American Ophthalmological Society, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Along with numerous invited and named lectures, his contributions to both the organization and presentation of subjects in ophthalmology were absorbed by a worldwide audience. He was awarded the Order of Canada as an officer in 1987.

At UBC he was in charge of the reorganization of the Medical Faculty and building the hospital on campus. As a part of the reorganization mentioned, he was faced with a proposed modernization of the Department of Ophthalmology which would have resulted in less space than existed. The result was a private fund-raising campaign that resulted in the UBC/VGH Eye Care Centre; the first freestanding facility in Canada at that time.

The Drance fellowship began in 1966 until after 2000. In that time an international group of glaucomatologists graduated to contribute to their subspecialty in many countries. All benefitted from the personal approach Stephen volunteered whether it was parallel clinical teaching or discussions at night on the phone. Opinions were available from both sides of any conversation. Many surgeries and experiences were shared. Disagreements were modified by quiet and considered conversations – including suggested references. Weekly rounds were held amongst fellows, technicians, and residents where old and new ideas were considered. Visiting colleagues were included. Thursday "rounds" at a local restaurant yielded even more

information for young minds. The glaucoma team of doctors and technicians generated many new ideas and all were considered equal in the meetings.

Stephen's style was one of a collective and equal milieu, where everyone could contribute. This was one of his greatest qualities. He could disagree with someone but you never felt "put down" as he was a master of diplomacy. As Head of the Department and at international meetings he could turn a proposal around just by his reasoned and rational alternative "suggestion".

Stephen and Betty met in Aden, she as a schoolteacher and he as a Medical Officer / water polo player, in the RAF. Nicely described in his autobiography, *The Golden Highway*. Stephen's family was always a priority especially his best friend Betty. If a visitor had any doubt as to whether or not they were in a friendly place, Betty would allay that doubt. They were an inseparable couple whose warmth was enjoyed by all, especially at their home. Surrounded by ancient maps, comforting company, and smiles we all gained so many wonderful memories from them. Betty pre-deceased Stephen but he became the ultimate caregiver during those years – again, another mark of the man and their union.

His long life allowed an abundance of achievement far beyond that of most of us. Music was a passion, more so, early music. He was a role model for so many on and off the medical field. He will be remembered as a gentleman, a pioneering scholar, a diplomat, and a close friend who should be recalled warmly as one of the top 5 glaucoma experts of the 20th century.

Gordon Douglas, Ototoks, Alberta, Canada