

Tribute to Dr. Doug Roy

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Every so often our medical community loses a true pioneer, someone truly crucial to the development of our current medical services and medical education at Dalhousie. Dr Douglas Roy who died recently aged 90 is one of those. His name would not be familiar to many now in our medical faculty and none of our students or residents, but his influence continues to be felt. Hopefully this brief tribute will provide some background on this remarkable Dalhousian.

A good doctor has been described as having knowledge with understanding, practical skill, and empathy but also, when necessary, detachment. Doug Roy had all of these attributes in abundance but they only partly describe the man. Of his medical skill one can say he was the consummate clinician, possessing diagnostic skills, particularly auscultation, of a degree rarely found in his era and almost never today. Not only was he amazingly accurate with his eyes, hands and ears, but he radiated enjoyment when performing physical examination, especially when teaching it. He had stories in abundance and loved mimicking signs, especially heart sounds and murmurs. All this and a mischievous sense of humour made him a consummate teacher and endeared him to students, children, and parents. His bedside auscultation teaching sessions were unforgettable: he demanded an honest effort from students but was always encouraging and kind which impressed families greatly. His teaching legacy has been preserved in his computer program for heart auscultation "EarsOn" which all first year Dalhousie medical students receive.

Whence came all these right and left brain skills? He was first of all very smart as any acquaintance can attest. He had a vast knowledge of medicine but also of music (he was self taught on piano, accordion, sax, and I believe the pipes in his youth), angling, navigation and blue water sailing, to mention only a few. He also played some pretty serious pool and cards earlier in his life and was always up for a challenge. A published author of both memoir and historical fiction, he dabbled in watercolours, designed a cottage and a marine railway for his boat, and seemed to relish new challenges of all types. All of these interests surely made him the clinician and teacher he was, and today's students

should take note of that in preparing themselves for a successful career in medicine.

His CV of course speaks for itself. After medical school at Dalhousie, in which he achieved high honours, he trained in internal medicine with several outstanding clinicians in Halifax. He then specialized in adult cardiology in Montreal with pioneers in the field, including Dr Arnold Johnson who performed some of the earliest cardiac catheterizations in Canada but also had an interest in congenital heart disease. Arriving back in Halifax in 1952 he practiced adult cardiology and published on the cardiac effects of thyroid disease, joining the staff of the Halifax Children's Hospital (later the IWK) in mid 1950s as its Cardiology Division Chief, which he remained until 1986. During that period he was instrumental in developing a pediatric cardiac surgical team, echocardiography, and especially the Maritime network of travelling clinics in eight locations, which were a model for pediatric outreach services for Canada. His vision was to ensure that all Maritime children had access to cardiac services within a couple of hours drive from home. Of course this meant that pediatric cardiologists were often on the road, but for Doug this meant opportunities to go fishing with various colleagues after the clinic work was done!

Those of us lucky enough to experience his clinical teaching or in my case have him as a mentor were fortunate indeed. His legacy is the pediatric cardiology program he started, we inherited and have grown to the benefit of Maritime children with heart conditions. He leaves us richer in so many ways.

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