

in memoriam

Dr Bill Webber 1934–2006

Dr Bill Webber, our friend and a highly regarded member of our faculty, died after a short struggle with the after-effects of a stroke. We had hoped to enjoy his presence for longer, to have more time to benefit from his wisdom, his knowledge, his guidance, and his good humor. The loss to his family and to the faculty is profound—we will miss him with all our hearts.

Dr William Alexander Webber was associated with the University of British Columbia, and the Faculty of Medicine, for over 50 years. Bill's commitment to the faculty was second only to his commitment to his family, including Marilyn, his wife, children Susan, Eric, and Geordie, and their families. In 1958 he graduated as an outstanding student in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and was the gold medallist in the Faculty of Medicine. Following his medical internship and postdoctoral training at Cornell Medical School he returned to UBC in 1961 as a member of the Department of Anatomy, with a research interest in the structure and function of the kidney. Over the years he taught gross anatomy, neuroanatomy, histology, and embryology.

An exceptional medical educator, Dr Webber was recognized by his students and faculty continually throughout his career. His many awards included the Killam University Teaching Award, the President's Service Award for Excellence in 1999, and an honorary degree (LLD) from UBC in 2000. At the honorary degree ceremonies, Dr Webber was acknowledged for having "impacted the careers of hundreds of medical and dental students in this province and inspired even more to greatness."

Dr Webber was secretary and president of the UBC Faculty Association and a member of the University Sen-

ate from 1966–1975 and 1977–1990. He also served a term on the UBC Board of Governors. His university administrative career began in 1971 when he was appointed the associate dean in the Faculty of Medicine. The appointment as dean followed in 1977. He filled his role with distinction serving 13 years—the longest term of any dean of medicine at UBC. He was subsequently appointed associate vice president academic from 1990 to 1996 and served a concurrent term as coordinator of the Health Sciences from 1992 to 1995.

Along the way, Dr Webber was instrumental in the development of the University's Centre for Faculty Development and Instructional Services, the Faculty Mentor program, the First Nations House of Learning, and the Disability Resources Centre. He also held various leadership roles in the community, including the Vancouver Institute, the Osler Society of Vancouver, and Boy Scouts of Canada. Active in professional bodies locally and nationally, he served on the boards and medical advisory committees of a number of Vancouver hospitals and played a major role in integrating the teaching hospitals into UBC's academic and research activities.

But above all, Bill Webber was a teacher and mentor. The faculty's most recent tribute to his outstanding contribution was the inauguration of the annual William Webber Lecture in Medical Education in the spring of 2005. In his introductory remarks to the first William Webber Lecture, Dr David Fairholm wrote:

[Dr Webber] has been the driving force behind many educational initiatives—not only in the Faculty of Medicine but widely throughout our university. Perhaps what is most striking about Bill is not just what he brings to educational programs but what he brings to individual learners. His long-



standing interest in education goes far beyond "the act of teaching." Bill is sincerely interested in his colleagues and his learners as individuals. He characteristically brings a human face to the educational endeavor. The William Webber Lecture in Medical Education will celebrate this humanistic approach to medical education.

Our heartfelt condolences to Marilyn, and to Susan, Eric, Geordie, and their families. The family has asked that anyone wishing to honor Bill's memory consider making a donation to the Faculty of Medicine in his name. We will endeavor to determine how this might best reflect his lasting contributions to the faculty.

—Gavin C.E. Stuart, MD
Dean, UBC Faculty of
Medicine