

Dr David A. Clarke 1920 – 2006

Dr David A. Clarke, longest-serving medical health officer of the South Okanagan Health Unit (SOHU)—1950 to 1984—passed away peacefully on 18 February 2006 at Westside Care Centre in Kelowna.

Born in Toronto, Dr Clarke graduated from McMaster University in 1943 with a BSc (Hons) in chemistry and physics, served in the Second World War as a lieutenant with the Royal Canadian Engineers (1943 to 1945), and received his MD degree in 1950 from the University of Western Ontario. He followed this with an internship at the Vancouver General Hospital and was recruited as the medical health officer for the SOHU in the fall of 1950. In 1953 he attended Harvard University and received his Master's of Public Health and obtained his certification in 1961 and fellowship in 1983.

David took pride in the many accomplishments of the SOHU during his directorship: In 1956, Kelowna was the second city in BC to fluoridate its domestic water supply; in 1962, SOHU declared the first compulsory pasteurized milk health unit and appointed BC's first provincial dental hygienist; in 1965, the Union Board of Health recommended standards for major waste water outfalls in the Okanagan Lake chain; the first Canadian community rubella clinic was held in Kelowna in 1965; the first community mumps clinic was held in the Kelowna/Rutland area in 1972; in 1974, homecare service was established; in 1977, an infant development nurse was employed; and in 1978, long-term care was established.

"Dr Clarke made a truly outstanding contribution to the betterment of the quality of life in the communities in the South Okanagan." (*Kelowna Courier*, 1976).

In 1978, Dr Clarke was recognized by the Canadian Public Health Association for his outstanding contribution to public health in Canada. He was the chairman of the BC Health Officers Council in 1979, director of the International Association of Water Pollution Research from 1970 to 1981, an honorary lecturer at UBC in the Faculty of Medicine, History of Medicine (1971 to 1983), and a member of the Environmental Health Committee of the BC Medical Association from 1964 to 1983. He served as president of the BC Public Health Association and of the Canadian Public Health Association from 1982 to 1984, representing Canada at conferences in Moscow, Paris, Khartoum, Montreal, and St. John's.

During his last years as director, plans for the \$6.2 million Kelowna Health Unit on Ellis Street were completed. The official opening was held in April 1992. This new health unit represented a significant step forward in the delivery of community health care in the Okanagan.

Throughout his career, he researched, interviewed, and collected medical, dental, and pharmaceutical artifacts related to the history of the Okanagan and in doing so, he amassed a significant collection of interest to

historians and other researchers. His extensive collection was donated to the Kelowna Museum Society in 2003.

During his career, David was on the front lines of the heavy growth period in the Okanagan, which triggered deterioration of the lake and pressure on the environment, and he warned vigorously of the inherent dangers in permitting ill-conceived and poorly planned developments. He may have offended certain special interest groups, but at the same time he earned the respect of many citizens in this community. The Kelowna medical staff was always a strong supporter of his public health policies.

In the last 10 years of his life, David's health slowly deteriorated due to Alzheimer disease. He received extremely strong support from his wife and family.

He is survived by his wife, Shirley, and his children, Bruce (Helen), Marilyn (Robert Bergen), Nancy (Bruce Hauser), David (Fraser Norrie), Catherine (David Cole), and Michael (Sharon Lowe) as well as 11 grandchildren. He was predeceased by his youngest son, Robert.

—Cliff Henderson, MD
Kelowna

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WANTED: GOOD GUYS

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