

# in memoriam

## Dr Ruth Roffmann 1917–2006

Dr Roffmann was born in Germany on 6 April 1917. She earned her medical degree and began her internship on the front lines during the Second World War.

In 1952, Dr Roffmann and her sister (my mother) immigrated to Canada, settling in Vancouver and Surrey. While on holiday in 1960, Ruth met and fell in love with the head wrangler at a dude ranch. She would go on to marry Jake Reinertson in 1963 and move her practice to the small village of 100 Mile House.

Ruth had a huge learning curve to overcome upon becoming the village doctor in a very rural setting in the middle of cattle country, living on a ranch, and learning about ranching.

Dr Roffmann was loved and respected by her patients for her sense of humor, compassion, and understanding. These attributes did not fade away when a patient came to see her for nonmedical advice.

She had a special relationship with the Aboriginal people of the area, admiring them for their deep commitment to family and to each other.

At the age of 65, Dr Roffmann slowed down a little, working only part-time.

At the age of 70, she retired and joined Jake with full-time ranching.

In 1992, Jake died and the light went out of my aunt's eyes as she bided her time here on earth, waiting to be with Jake again.

On 14 July 2006, my aunt and uncle were reunited for the last time.

—Jorunn Ivarsdatter  
North Vancouver

## Dr William Murray Robinson 1945–2006

Less than a year after a dreadful diagnosis, constant pain, immobility, and therapeutic setbacks, Murray died comfortably in his home. His family and close friends remained with him a few more hours, with candles lit, sipping good wine.

Murray was a realist. After oceans of tears had been shed, he set out all his arrangements. To ease the foreseen burdens on his beloved wife, Patty, and adored son, Alec, he planned his funeral, picked his eulogists, and asked me to write his obituary for the *BCMJ*. He also decided that his memorial service should be on a Saturday "so that the surgeons won't lose any OR time"!

Murray was a Vancouverite. He grew up in the Dunbar area and stayed nearby. His mother still lives in his and his brother's childhood home. He attended Lord Kitchener Elementary School, went (rarely) to Sunday school at Dunbar Heights United Church, and excelled at Lord Byng High School, graduating in 1963. After 3 years of undergraduate studies at UBC, he was admitted to its Faculty of Medicine, receiving his MD in 1970. He had an outstanding academic record, annually placing in the top 10 of his class. He interned at St. Paul's Hospital in 1970



## Helping Yourself or a Colleague

Physicians are feeling the strain in a changing health care world. We are not invincible and we need to take care of ourselves. Self care does not mean diagnosing and treating ourselves or our families. In an ideal situation, all BC physicians would have and regularly consult with their own family physician. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and one of the main obstacles seems to be concerns about privacy.

The Physician Health Program of British Columbia is a confidential resource for physicians, medical students, residents and their families. Common concerns dealt with by the program include, but are not limited to: personal and family emotional health issues, the inappropriate use of alcohol and/or drugs or coping with physical illness etc. The PHP is staffed by physicians who are keenly aware of the sensitive nature of these matters and who respect the privacy of those who contact the program. If you choose, you can call the program anonymously.

We should not be afraid to reach out for assistance if we need it. In addition, we have a responsibility to colleagues who might be experiencing difficulty. If you have concerns about yourself or someone close to you please don't hesitate...

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**Dr. Paul A. Farnan,  
Clinical Coordinator**

and went on to a residency in anesthesiology after seriously considering a career in research or psychiatry. One year of his residency was spent doing research with the Department of Pharmacy and Pharmacology. During his final year, as chief resident, he was on the executive of the then newly formed PARI and risked losing job offers in order to stand by his principles and go on strike with the other residents. After receiving the highest marks nationally on the oral exam and earning his FRCP, he practised as an anesthesiologist for a few months at Surrey Memorial Hospital and then at St. Paul's Hospital for 30 years. He belonged to many associations over the years and was on the executive of the Canadian Anesthesiology Society. He was also a member of the Keith Journal Club.

Murray was an excellent physician, devoted to his patients and his profession. With his ability to use the KISS principle of getting back to the basic elements, he could deal with the most complex situations. With his uncanny knack for detecting trouble, Murray would poke his nose into the OR, CCU, or ICU and teasingly ask, "Do you need some help, doctor?" and, if the challenge did not push the team to

correct the problem, he could be depended upon to help.

Dr Murray Robinson, clinical assistant professor, was a teacher. He sat on all the hospital and department medical education committees. Many are not aware of his formidable intellect and academic successes that provided the profound knowledge behind his clinical work and teaching. Residents and students at all levels of training, from all specialties, learned from him and loved working with him. He could be scathing, insulting, mischievous, and challenging, but they knew he was always supportive, mentoring, and never belittling. "Don't let those bastards get you down," he'd say.

After his illness began, Murray was surprised and deeply moved by the outpouring of respect and caring that came from his former students from across the country. He had no idea that he had had such an influence on them and his colleagues. He personally felt that he had "learned more from the old guys than the young hot residents" and was indebted to his own teachers.

Murray was irreverent, a cynic, a man with charisma, humor, and caustic wit. The twinkle in his eye gave him away, and everyone he knew has a personal anecdote of some particu-

larly funny event with him.

Murray was a friend. At the memorial service celebrating and honoring his life, held 22 July at the Dunbar Heights United Church, the pews and aisles were overflowing. His friends Bill Phillips and Joe Delvicario both mentioned in their eulogies how Murray had the "common touch." He respected everyone. Murray had friends among the cleaners, porters, residents, nurses, and colleagues at St. Paul's. There were no boundaries to his caring for people.

Murray loved sports and cars, especially Formula 1 racing. He was thrilled by taking Alec to hockey games. He enjoyed woodworking, furniture making, good wines, scotch, traveling, and meeting interesting people.

His marriage to lovely Patty Hryciuk and the arrival of Alec in 1998 provided Murray with unanticipated joy and happiness. It is this family as well as his wonderful mother, Helen, brother, Dr Gordon Robinson, and many nieces and nephews who will desperately miss Murray as, already, we all do.

—Vera Frinton, MD  
Vancouver

## directory

### VOLUNTEER PHYSICIANS NEEDED

The 2005 BCMA health promotion campaign, *Eat well, Play well, Stay well*, is promoting healthy active living to reduce and prevent childhood obesity.

BCMA is looking for physicians, medical residents, and medical school students to provide a short presentation at school parent advisory committee meetings in their community. Volunteers will be provided with a PowerPoint presentation and handout material on healthy active living.

**Locally demonstrate your interest in health promotion.**

**To sign up or learn more, contact Fiona Youatt at 604 638-2881 or [fyouatt@bcma.bc.ca](mailto:fyouatt@bcma.bc.ca).**

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