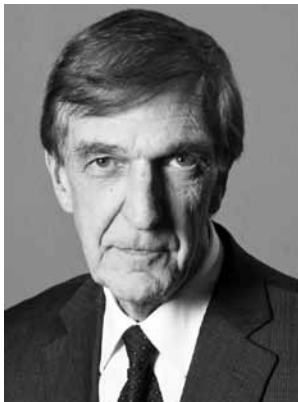


## Dr Peter Doris 1948–2018



Dr Peter Doris grew up in Ontario. He was a medical student at Queen's University at Kingston and later a general surgeon at affiliated hospitals. Mid-career he moved to Surrey, BC, where he was quickly recognized as an outstanding surgeon, especially for abdominal pathology. On appointment as chief of the Department of Surgery at Surrey Memorial Hospital, he addressed the management of surgical services in the emergency room and moved to 24-hour surgical care. As surgical chief he found himself on numerous committees, where he was a popular advocate. On executive committees he found himself increasingly involved with Surrey Memorial Hospital's role in the rapid expansion of Surrey's community and its multicultural development. Dr Doris's dream was that Surrey Memorial would be the link, as a teaching hospital, between the University of British Columbia and the Surrey campus of Simon Fraser University. He had the support of the medical staff but not of the administration, which over subsequent years removed physicians from roles in the hospital's development.

Despite having a busy surgical practice, his door was always open to colleagues seeking advice on patients or hospital issues, and he continued

to press for physician involvement in the hospital's development. He spoke about the role of the physician in the hospital system at the 2016 College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC annual general meeting, and his presentation was so popular that it was repeated twice during the day.

Struck by sudden illness, Dr Doris lingered in hospital care, and it is saddening that in his final months he didn't have the attention he needed and deserved.

—John O'Brien-Bell, MB  
Surrey

## Dr Ralph William Spitzer 1918–2018



Dr Ralph William Spitzer passed away in Victoria, BC, on 17 October 2018 at the age of 100. He is survived by his loving family: wife, Hisako Kurotaki; daughter, Eloise (Rob); and granddaughter, Kali. Ralph was predeceased by his first wife of 59 years, Therese, and their son, Matthew.

Ralph's contribution to building a superb laboratory medicine—chemical pathology service in the Lower Mainland was immense. I was fortunate to have been chosen by him in the postdoctoral program in clinical biochemistry that he had set up at Royal Columbian Hospital in 1970; thus, my career in the medical biochemistry field was launched because of his

vision. I am eternally grateful.

Ralph was a unique individual with a strong commitment to a pluralistic and diverse society. He lived his values and supported many initiatives that were embedded in those values.

He had a brilliant mind, graduating from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, with a BSc in chemistry at the age of 20, and completing a PhD at the age of 23. His PhD mentor was Dr Linus Pauling, winner of two Nobel prizes. Ralph pursued an academic career at Oregon State University as an associate professor in biochemistry. In 1949, he became a victim of the McCarthy era in the United States and was fired from the university for his political views. In 1950, while traveling and lecturing in Europe, he was arrested, incarcerated, and held in isolation in Rotterdam. His passport confiscated, he was forced to return to the United States. In 1954 Ralph decided to move to Canada, which benefited Canada greatly. He completed medical school at the University of Manitoba, and in 1958 the family moved to New Westminster, where he began his long career as a chemical pathologist with the newly formed group, Dr C.J. Coady and Associates, which operated BC Biomedical Medical Laboratories and provided consultative services to the Royal Columbian Hospital regional laboratory system.

Ralph contributed to the academic world and was a professor at the UBC School of Medicine. He was a true pioneer, being the first medical biochemist in the province, developing both a high-level community-based laboratory service as well as contributing to academic excellence. He took the practice of biochemistry to patients' bedsides, thus benefiting thousands of patients who received care at the Royal Columbian Hospital. Laboratory medicine also

*Continued on page 84*

## obituaries

Continued from page 83

benefited from Ralph's creative energy, innovative mind, and commitment to excellence. He was generous in teaching and mentored several postdoctoral students for successful careers in clinical biochemistry.

Ralph was a man of many seasons. Besides being a brilliant scientist, clinician, and teacher, he had many outside interests. He was an avid skier and a mountaineer. He became a bonsai gardener, and he learned to play the organ in retirement, building an organ in his living room that had over 2000 pipes. He traveled widely well into his 90s, visiting Europe, Turkey, China, Japan, Southeast Asia, India, South America, and Antarctica.

Stenciled at the base of Ralph's massive pipe organ is a phrase that perfectly captured his perspective on life: *ars longa, vita brevis* (art is long, life is short). He was loved and admired by his colleagues, friends, and family. He will be missed by his colleagues and students, whose lives he influenced significantly.

—Arun K. Garg, PhD, MD  
New Westminster

### Dr W. Donald Watt 1924–2018



It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Dr (William) Donald Watt. Don was born in Allendale (now Barrie) Ontario on 14 November 1924, and passed away peacefully in his sleep on 29 December 2018 at the age of 94 in Abbotsford, BC. He was

predeceased by his wife of 57 years, (Victoria) June Watt; his parents, Rev (William) John Watt and Edith Catherine Watt; his six older siblings and their partners; and his first grandchild, Lorraine. He is survived by his children, (William) David Watt (Cindy), George Donald Watt (Ying), Victoria Joy Manson (Bradley), and Elizabeth June Watt (Denis Durand).

Don joined the Royal Canadian Air Force after high school and received his wings as World War II was ending. He graduated from the University of Toronto with his MD in 1950, then interned and worked at the Wellesley Hospital, Hospital for Sick Children, and Toronto Western Hospital for the next 2 years where he met June, a nurse and former World War II Wren (member of the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service).

In 1952 Don began a 38-year career working for the United Church of Canada (UCC), Board of Home Missions. Initially placed as the lone MD on the Queen Charlotte Islands (now Haida Gwaii), he delivered medical care via plane, truck, and boat, with June volunteering by his side. He was soon assigned the position of corner, justice of the peace, and medical health officer. He set up clinics in Sandspit, Skidegate Village, Masset, and in logging camps at Juskatla and Cumshewa Inlet, and facilitated building the 21-bed Queen Charlotte City Hospital, which opened in 1955.

In 1956 Don moved to Bella Coola, where he spent 7 years as physician, hospital superintendent, and caregiver to lighthouses and remote logging camps in the area. He was later adopted into the Nuxalk (Bella Coola) Nation by the Walkus and Edgar families and named Nooskumiich (one who heals with his hands) and Nenetsmlayc (one who brings back to life) at the opening of the new Bella Coola Hospital in 1980.

In the early 1960s Don moved to Prince Rupert and then Vancouver as medical superintendent for all the

UCC hospitals across Canada. A gifted orator, he spent the next 24 years traveling to UCC medical outposts from BC to Newfoundland negotiating the building of new hospitals and acquiring new equipment, recruiting dedicated staff, encouraging local hiring, and ensuring local representation on hospital boards. He continued to practise medicine as a relief physician wherever needed.

While in Vancouver, Don served on the boards of St. Michael's Centre, Chalmers Lodge, St. Stephen's United Church, and the Alcohol-Drug Education Service. A proponent of full-service family medicine, Don received his CCFP in 1971 and his FCFP in 1974. Beginning in 1980 he served two terms as president of the BC College of Family Physicians, and in 1986 was president of the College of Family Physicians Canada. A champion of the 2-year family practice residency, he spent 25 years as a clinical instructor for the UBC Medical School. Don received an honorary doctorate of divinity from Union College, UBC, in 1970, and the David M. Bachop Gold Medal in 1989 in recognition of "his successful and resourceful efforts to bring care to small, isolated communities."

Don and June will be forever missed, but their legacy of hospitality, selflessness, humor, grace, and excellence in delivering medical care to those who needed it most remains. More of their story can be found in the book *Healing in the Wilderness*, by Rev. Bob Burrows. A memorial service and celebration of this extraordinary life was held at Trinity United Memorial Church in Abbotsford on 2 February.

—Elizabeth J. Watt, MD  
Abbotsford