



In Memoriam

BUSKARD, Noel Adam (1939 - 2011) Age: 71

UNT D CARLETON 1957 U-158



Dr. Noel Buskard, known as a thorn in the side of medical authorities during his career but, nevertheless, a brilliant teacher and clinician, died Saturday, July 16, 2011, in Vancouver. He would have been 72 on Monday. Buskard was a champion of patients' rights, quality of care and transparency in how medical care was provided. A clinical professor emeritus in the University of B.C.'s Faculty of Medicine's hematology division, Buskard retired in 2005 after 27 years in the department.

"Dr. Buskard gave sterling service as a clinician, taught with panache and played a leadership role in a number of national and international societies," said a statement issued by UBC on his retirement. Not surprisingly it failed to mention the uproar he caused in the ranks of administrators at Vancouver General Hospital in the late 1990s when he was embroiled in controversy for speaking out against what he perceived to be unsafe conditions in the hospital and the poor state of laboratory services, while charging top officials with incompetence. In a Vancouver Sun story in November 2001, it was said of him that "while some colleagues regard him as an unprofessional crank, many others consider him a brilliant clinician and teacher, if not a hero" He was awarded the 2001 Whistleblower Award from the B.C. Freedom of Information and Privacy Association.

However, his decision to go public wasn't without cost. In 1999 the hospital administrators forced him to take a psychiatric examination — which he passed. At one point, he accused the hospital of launching a "dirty tricks" campaign against him and threatened to launch a defamation suit.

But his students loved him. He was named clinician of the year in 1998 by the Medical Undergraduate Society and was described by students as "energetic, dedicated and able to bring humour and compassion to his teaching." In the early and mid-1980s he was medical director of the Vancouver blood centre operated by the Canadian Red Cross during the early years of the AIDS tragedy that saw thousands of people across Canada infected with HIV and hepatitis from contaminated blood transfusions.

He quit the Red Cross in 1991 saying it had developed a "fortress mentality" when confronted with the tragedy. He later played a part in the early days of the Bone Marrow Transplant Program in Vancouver and the International Bone Marrow Transplant Registry.

Buskard was born in Ottawa and attended Queen's University in Kingston, Ont. His first career was in the Canadian Navy where he served as a pilot, said his son James.

"His story is that he was doing that until his eyesight went bad and he had to think of something else to do," he said of his father's decision to leave the navy to study medicine. The doctor is survived by sisters Janet McDairmid and Ruth Krupka, and children Sarah, John, Adam, James, Felicity, Verity-Claire and Andrew.

A memorial service will be held July 25 at 6 p.m. in the Sage Bistro at University Centre, 6331 Crescent Rd.

Many UNTDs will have known him as a fellow Cadet and others as a perennial CORNWALLIS Term Lieutenant and Nav Instructor, starting in 1962, the last time being as Termie of Yukon Division in 1965.