



Appointment with Pohlman

Farewell To A Cherished Friend

By Ralph Pohlman

John Scanlon was one of my best friends. I say was because he died on Friday, July 23 in Chaumont, New York, a little place on Lake Ontario near Watertown, which is just across the border from Kingston. He was 83.

Of course he will have an official obituary in the local papers, but I want to tell you some of the stuff that won't be in the obituary.

I had known him since 1952 when we met in the first year of medical school at Queen's University in Kingston. That would be 58 years ago. He had been in the U.S. Army (maybe he still was) and had just come back from Korea.

First year in medical school was tough. They tended to get rid of students that, for some reason, they decided shouldn't be doctors. Everybody was terrified and studying their asses off.

One of my early memories of John is that he had been summoned to see the dean after the Christmas exams because, as the dean said, he got the lowest mark in "radiation physics" in history. He got eight percent. "Well," John said, "I hadn't been to school for a while."

Let me begin by saying that John Scanlon was one of the most decent, honest, courageous, tolerant and humorous people I have ever known. And if he doesn't get into heaven, then nobody does.

For the first couple of years, before he married Betty, he lived in Hotel Dieu Hospital where he had a room next to the chapel because he got up and helped at 7 a.m. mass every day. He also was an orderly on a ward that was full of decrepit, ancient or otherwise chronically ill nuns. He called it "The Virgins' Ward".

After we graduated from medical school (surprise, eh?) in the mid-1950s he did his internship at Detroit Receiving Hospital, a hospital that took the emergencies from the area. After that he trained as an ophthalmologist, which, as you probably know, is an eye specialist and surgeon. He practised in Watertown, but always kept his connections to Queen's. He served on the Board of Governors and, after he retired and Betty had died, he moved into one of the residences

as a mentor to students. He got along with everyone and, actually, he seemed to 'collect' people.

Over the years, John and I would meet at Wolfe Island in early September for a couple of days of fishing on the St. Lawrence. He wasn't a bad fisherman, but he couldn't cast worth beans. And he used live bait (minnows or shrimp), if you can believe that.

For much of his life he did trips for an outfit that was something like Doctors Without Borders and would go off to places like Somalia, Sierra Leone or Ghana for the month of February, live in a grass hut, eat rice and beans, and look out the 'window' in the morning where, he said, there would be 400 people sitting on the ground, waiting. The next morning would be just the same.

And he collected old sets of spectacles (lots of folk have them stashed in a drawer) and would take a suitcase full with him to pass out to those who needed them.

Having lost Betty about 15 or so years ago, he married Sally, who had lost her husband about five or six years earlier. They were a great team. John continued to do his foreign medical work and Sally went and helped. But about three months ago he was overtaken with a malignancy and the end was near and he knew it.

Just before he died I went to see him. He was getting palliative care and Sally and Roberta, his daughter from Gainesville, Fla., were trying to direct traffic and cut down on the visitors, who were arriving from everywhere. He was weak, frail, a bit confused. He thought we were in Florida.

I sat by his side for a while with my elbow on the bed, holding hands in that position where guys might arm-wrestle. His voice was a whisper. He drifted off to sleep and woke up a minute or two later and said, "Oh... I'm still here."

But not for long. When I left, I knew I wouldn't see him again in this world.

It felt like the end of an era.

But maybe we'll go fishing again, sometime... somewhere.

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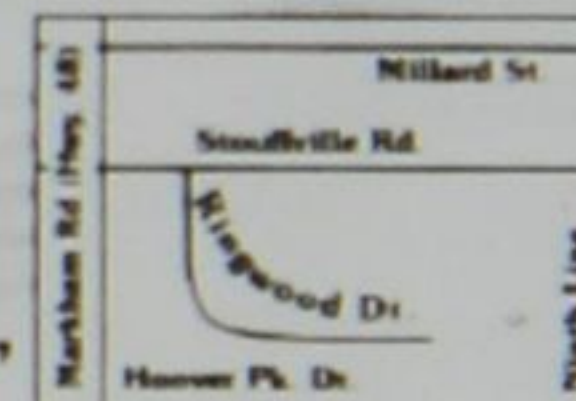
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Readers Write

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To the Editor:

I would like to thank the *Stouffville Free Press* for the promotion for our June clinic at Latcham Hall. Your newspaper made a real difference to the lives of many in need. At our last clinic our goal was 65 units and we had 96 people show up to give their support! That was amazing.

At the end of the day we were able to collect 85 units which translates to 255 lives being saved, which is totally remarkable. That's what promoting does for our clinics. On behalf of the patients who depend on the kindness of others, thank you for taking the time

to better and save the lives of many by being our voice to the community.

Clara Angumba
Community Development Coordinator
Canadian Blood Services

Editor's note: We are delighted that the response was so enthusiastic and we would like to note that the true heroes are our advertisers, whose generous sponsorship was so effective in soliciting donations, and our readers, who came out to support such a worth while cause.

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