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Tribute to the Late Dr. Gerald B. Price

Note from the Editor:

On June 21, 2003, Dr. Gerald B. Price, the director of the Division of Experimental Medicine, unexpectedly passed away due to a heart attack. Dr. Price's untimely death caught us all by surprise and he will always be remembered by the students in Experimental Medicine.

When I decided to put together this special tribute issue of our EUREKA! Newsletter, I immediately realized that it would be a daunting task to properly showcase the tremendous impact that Dr. Price had on the students in Experimental Medicine, and on the Division as a whole. Under his supervision, Experimental Medicine has become the class of biomedical graduate studies at McGill, with higher enrolment and more self-funded graduate students than any other department. Dr. Price was an initiating force behind the Annual McGill Biomedical Graduate Conference, which is run by the EMGSS and has quickly become a leading research conference at McGill. Aside from the academics, Dr. Price had the reputation as being "pro-student", which meant that if you had any problem related to your graduate studies, he was more than willing to solve it.

I personally had the opportunity to deal with Dr. Price both as a student in his class and as Co-President of the EMGSS. As a teacher, Dr. Price's witty

comments always kept his class interesting. As for his interactions with the EMGSS, he was always available to help us solve problems and to offer first-rate suggestions. I will miss his rare mix of candor and kindness and I hope that this tribute issue truly does justice to his legacy.

I would like to thank all of the graduate students in Experimental Medicine whose heartfelt submissions to this issue reflect Dr. Price's ability to reach out to his students. Although some may say that his methods were unconventional, there is no disputing the fact that this man devoted his life to the students in Experimental Medicine and we have all reaped the benefits of his hard work and dedication. We will all miss him dearly... - RL



**EMGSS Names Top Award at
AMBGC in Honor of Dr. Price**

The EMGSS would like to announce that the first place oral award at the Annual McGill Biomedical Graduate Conference (AMBGC) will now be known as the Gerald B. Price Award for First Place Oral Presentation at the AMBGC. Dr. Price was a driving force behind the creation of the AMBGC and his guidance and support helped make the first three AMBGCs highly successful.

Caring and Knowing, Knowing and Caring

By Roy Dudley

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."
-W.B. Yeats

Gerald Price was the director of McGill University's Division of Experimental Medicine since 1995. He participated in so many other facets of academia that I must shy away from listing them here. I'd rather tell about Dr. Price, the person, at least what I knew about him anyway. I first bumped into him on registration day, a few years ago. He was sitting at the end of a long wooden table with his head tilted forward, looking down his nose over the top rims of his glasses. "Why the hell do you want to take this course," he asked the nervous

looking student in front of me. She later walked by me looking obviously pleased with the advice given to her. Then I approached the same table. Dr. Price looked at me and



The late Dr. Gerald B. Price

said, "I better be careful with this one. Looks like he could beat the daylight out of me."

Dr. Price lends credence to the saying, "first impressions can be deceiving." The gruffer he came on, the more interested he was in advising students on curricula. And I soon learned that he did a lot more than advise us on what courses to take. Dr. Price was a tremendous supporter of student efforts to better University life and a staunch defender of student rights.

To meet him in hallway or lab, was to get his trademark, "How are things going?" and then a more rigorous, "How is your supervisor?" and you knew right away he wasn't inquiring about your supervisor's health. I would have hated to be a supervisor who wasn't fulfilling his or her obligations. I get the feeling that

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Reflections from EMGSS Presidents - Past and Present

In my three years of graduate studies in the Division of Experimental Medicine, I have had the pleasure of interacting with Dr. Price on a number of occasions. As a bright-eyed first-year student, Dr. Price welcomed me into the Division and offered me advice regarding graduate courses that would complement my interest in both science and business. As a student enrolled in his Molecular Control of Normal & Malignant Cell Growth class, I witnessed first-hand his passion for scientific discovery as he enthusiastically described pivotal experiments performed by pioneers in the field of cancer research. His seminars were both enlightening and refreshing, and I looked forward to attending them. His lectures taught me the importance of applying a critical mind when reading scientific literature. His teaching style often triggered class discussions, providing students with an open and challenging learning environment.

My experience on the Experimental Medicine Graduate Students' Society (EMGSS) as a student representative in 2001-2002 and as Co-President in 2002-2003 gave me the opportunity to work very closely with Dr. Price while planning both the 2nd and the 3rd Annual McGill Biomedical Graduate Conference (AMBGC). By believing in the members of the EMGSS, he instilled in us the confidence needed to successfully organize the only student-run biomedical symposium at McGill. Offering his support throughout the various planning stages of the AMBGC, Dr. Price played a significant role in mentoring the EMGSS and in turn we set ourselves high expectations to improve the AMBGC from year to year. More importantly, Dr. Price did not hesitate to extend his support when the EMGSS experienced "crisis situations" such as last minute keynote speaker cancellations. The EMGSS very much appreciated his guidance.

Dr. Price was above all a champion of student causes. By standing up for students, often against

high profile professors, Dr. Price proved that a powerful and successful researcher could also be a beacon of kindness and fairness. As the Director of the Division since 1995, he worked tirelessly to ensure that the Division of Experimental Medicine was well represented while maintaining its excellent reputation as an attractive graduate student division.

Overwhelmingly passionate for research and dedicated to graduate students, he will remain an inspiration for all of us who had the privilege of knowing him.

Sabrina Perri
EMGSS Co-President, 2002-2003

On Wednesday, June 25, I attended Dr. Price's memorial at the McGill Cancer Center. It was a somber affair with many professors and even more students in attendance. During Dean Fuk's eulogy of Dr. Price, he mentioned how proud Dr. Price was of all his students and he touched upon the Annual McGill Biomedical Conference as being particularly special for Dr. Price. Apparently, he had spoken to many of his peers about how the conference was established by his students for McGill University. While listening to Dean Fuk's, it became apparent to me that he was unaware of Dr. Price's part in the conference. The fact is, Dr. Price contributed greatly in providing support and assistance throughout the conference's planning. I remember in particular, the problems we had with finding judges for the conference's first year. Almost a third of our judges cancelled a week before the conference due to time conflicts with their grant submission deadline, which was the day after the conference. I was therefore left scrambling for judges the week before the conference where I felt more like a telemarketer than a student. I left a letter with Dr. Price, stating our predicament. To my surprise and shock, he called me at home that evening and by the morning, he provided me with a list of over 30 professors to help our cause. At his

memorial, I realized that Dr. Price never made one mention regarding his contributions to our inaugural efforts and I believe that was simply his way of doing things. He was not the type of man to bask in the glory of his accomplishments nor was he the type to talk about which students or how many he had helped as the head of Experimental Medicine. In fact, I would be surprised if there was any student in Experimental Medicine who did not know at least one person who had benefited from his assistance. This being said, I feel that Dr. Price's passing was a huge loss for the students and on a personal level, he will be missed greatly.

George Chan
EMGSS President, 2000-2001

Dr. Price,

Do you remember when I was president of the EMGSS? At first, you intimidated me, but slowly we began to have a special rapport. I bounced ideas from EMGSS meetings to you. I asked you if it was feasible, if it was affordable, if it was interesting. You told me yes...of course it's feasible, yes...with some help it's affordable...and yes...if it interests you, it will interest others. You were there to recommend speakers and to suggest how to get extra funds. When I had conflicts with council members, you gave me valuable advice but allowed me to solve the problems on my own. You made sure that Experimental Medicine students were always well represented, as was evident by all who attended faculty meetings. You were outspoken, concerned, and always open to new ideas. You believed that everything we wanted to do was possible. For that, I thank you.

Caroline Rousseau
EMGSS President, 1999-2000

Caring... (continued from page 1)

his gruffness then, might not be so much a front.

Dr. Price encouraged student involvement in the day-to-day running of the Experimental Medicine division and he was particularly proud and supportive of the Experimental Medicine Graduate Students' Society (EMGSS) and Let's Talk Science organizations. He was particularly helpful with such efforts as the Annual McGill Biomedical Graduate Conference (AMBGC), but he always made sure that it was the students who ran the show.

As part of the EMGSS, I remember how despite being intricately involved in the AMBGC, Dr. Price stayed out of the spotlight so that it was us students that would shine more brightly. Of course part of this "behind-the-scenes demeanor" was also that he was a very private individual. Dominique Besso, our administrative coordinator, told me it took almost a decade of badgering before Dr. Price would reveal his birth date.

I can tell you that Dr. Price was born on March 8, 1945, and died on June 21, 2003 as a result of a heart attack. Fifty-eight years old is obviously much too young to go, especially so when you work in a field like ours, in which the goal is to increase human life expectancy. What I knew best about Dr. Price was that he was helpful and he cared, but when I was asked to write a tribute to him I got a chance to read his resume. There are pages upon pages listing papers he authored, as well as, positions he held. As I mentioned earlier, there are way too many to list, but what caught my eye is that although some of his appointment terms, such as McGill University Senate (1988-1994) have ended, many others remain open ended, such as his appointment as a director of the Division of Experimental Medicine (June 1995-) and his role as President and Chairman of the Cancer Research Society and Board of Directors (December 2000-). Sadly, it's clear that he was only really getting started.

Dr. Price didn't just try to shake your pail at the registration desk with his gruff manner. It was his way of trying to light a massive bonfire. He was also deeply involved in every aspect of Experimental Medicine and believed fervently in the power of students to bring about positive change. It has been said that students don't care how much a teacher knows until they know how much the teacher cares about them. Well, Dr. Price cared an awful lot about us and because of that, we listened carefully to what he knew. One thing I do know is that we'll miss him much more than we may ever understand.

Remembering a Mentor...

Graduate students in Experimental Medicine share their memories of the late Dr. Price

A listening ear... a sharp mind... didn't mess around with words... sound and clear advice though sometimes painful:) ... I was shocked by his departure and I will miss him.

-David Davidson

I was shocked when I read the email yesterday (regarding Dr. Price's death). I am so sad about this. Dr. Price was a nice person and he really cared about the students. Life is so fragile.

-Lily Lu

I was so surprised to hear the bad news. I was telling myself that I should have given him my gratitude earlier, and now it is too late. Dr. Price was a kind, friendly, and humorous person. Students love him very much. It is a great loss for us all. I am sure he will live forever in all the students' hearts.

-Ni Shen

I will remember Dr. Price as a smart guy who liked playing the role of the "bad guy" during his lectures. He used to bring examples of "classical" experiments to show us how much science has evolved.

-Fernando Frankel

I really appreciated Dr. Price's teaching in the classes. It was stimulating and really prompted us to think scientifically. Thanks, Dr. Price, you are one of the most influential teachers I met.

-Jia-Chi (Jack) Wang

I am so sad, behind his serious face he had a kind heart, open to help students.

-Ramin Zargham

Thank you for all the help you offered me when I had troubles in my lab. Thank you for all the support you gave me when I coordinated Let's Talk Science. Farewell, my beloved Dr. Price.

-Karen Lee

I will never forget Dr. Price for all the help he gave me. He took a chance on me many times and helped me when I needed help most. I will never forget that for as long as I live. If it was not for him I would not be where I am today, and I am sure this is so true of many, many people who were lucky enough to know him. He will leave a big gap in the hearts of everyone and his absence will be strongly felt. We will miss his genuine eagerness to help everyone and his sound advice and direction. We will miss his kindness and compassion. We will miss his humor and sarcasm. Life at McGill will not be the same without him.

-Imad Al Ghouleh

Dr. Gerald Price was the pillar of our department, his legacy will be missed by those who passed before us, ourselves and those who follow in our footsteps.

-Leon Tourian Jr.

C'est avec une triste surprise que j'ai appris la mort subite de notre professeur Dr. Price. En tant que l'un de ses étudiants, c'est une très grande perte que nous venons de subir. Dr. Price nous manquera pour longtemps. Je transmet mes condoléances les plus émues aux membres de sa famille.

-Laurent Seti

The first time I met Dr. Price was quite interesting. In September 2000, I got accepted in the Department of Experimental Medicine. I had some difficulty to select my courses, so I thought it would be a great idea to seek some advice from the director of the Division. Regarding this matter, Dr. Price gave me an appointment to see him. As soon as I sat down in his office, his lab technician walked in and they started to have a tough and heated discussion. I felt very awkward and after couple minutes I politely asked him if it might be better to come back some other time. Suddenly, he looked at me, took off his glasses, rubbed his eyes and told me to be quiet and then continued to argue. To be honest with you I was freaked out. Here I was in the middle of a heated argument, waiting for this seemingly crazy man to select and approve my courses. I told myself to just take any course he suggests and get the hell out of there. Finally, the technician walked out and slammed the door. Then, he looked at me, took his glasses off, and rubbed his eyes again. There was silence for couple minutes. I was already freaked out, but with that silence I became very nervous and I just wanted to tell him that I have changed my mind for taking any courses this fall. He finally put a smile on his face and asked me to go with him for a coffee so that we could discuss my selections. We sat and went through the whole course selection process together. He was an intimidating character, but I knew from that first meeting that he was a great person with a big heart.

The last time I saw him was just three or four days before he left us. It was in grocery store. I said hello and he replied with a big smile. I reminded him about our first meeting and we shared a few laughs. We will truly miss this kind man who had lots of love and support for all his students.

Bonne Voyage, Dr. Price.

-Maziar Divangahi

Dr. Price, Gerald, our mentor and pioneer, may you ever stay in our hearts with the memory of your compassion, dedication and endless enthusiasm for science and education.

-Eujin Kim

It was my first day as a McGill student registering for my first year. At that point the only faculty member I knew was my supervisor, so I was a little edgy going in to meet new professors. Well the second professor that I met was Dr. Price. As I entered the room he was in, he was sitting at the end of the room looking over some papers. I was intimidated by his

face full of knowledge and I started to worry until he looked up and with a smile on his face asked me to sit down. The entire time during the registration process his helpfulness and guidance made him more like an old friend rather than a stern professor, and I only knew him for 15 minutes. After knowing him a year I guess it must have been his jolly smile, but whatever it may have been I will miss him.

-Casimiro Gerarduzzi

My first meeting with Dr. Price was a frustrating one. I left his office sure that he was going to be a tough nut to crack, having had to argue my way into Experimental Medicine. At one point, when comparing grading scales, I had stated that my GPA at my previous university was 7.0. "No, it wasn't," he responded. "I calculated it three times; your GPA was 6.96." Eventually he relented, however, I couldn't help thinking that it would be no use trying to get along with a guy like that. But as a good scientist should, I decided to reserve judgment until I had all the data.

That first impression couldn't have been more wrong. As soon as I got back to my lab I discussed the encounter with some friends at the lab. One of them told me she had had a similar experience. Nonetheless, she didn't seem to resent Dr. Price for it. In fact, she assured me that Dr. Price was an extremely fair man. He was more than that. I have grown not only to respect but truly to like Dr. Price. I feel like a kid who turns his nose up at his supper and whose parents assure him that if he just gives Brussels sprouts a try he might actually like them. To finally admit that you like them is to take your pride down a notch.

I realize now that Dr. Price was playing a role in that first meeting. He was acting as gatekeeper, and willing to admit into the division only those who could prove themselves to him. He played other roles, as he saw fit, shepherding the students in his keep through the program and on to greater successes. I got to know him better as he taught my first course in the Division; by the end of that course it was clear to me that he wanted nothing more than to challenge his students to set their goals high and to exceed expectations. Or, to put it in the words he used so often, "to think outside the box."

Dr. Price was a mentor and an advocate for his students with high expectations of himself and others. This may occasionally have rubbed people the wrong way. I suppose some people are too stubborn ever to give Brussels sprouts a chance, and others may try them and still maintain that they want nothing to do with them.

Me, I'm a sprouts fan.

- James Scrivens

On behalf of all of the graduate students in Experimental Medicine, the EMGSS offers our deepest sympathies to the family of Dr. Price. We will all miss him dearly...