

**Service of Thanksgiving at Trinity Henleaze - United Reform Church  
11<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

**Eulogy for Colin Davidson**

There are probably many people in the congregation who have known Colin for longer than I have. I first met him in the spring of 1970 when I came to view a post at Frenchay. Unlike previous hospitals I had visited, where I usually had a couple of minutes with one of the resident consultants, Colin took considerable trouble to show me around and point out with great clarity the strengths and weaknesses of the post. I liked him immediately, and he became my friend and colleague from July of that year.

Firstly, I would like to speak about his surgical career.

Colin was a Scot and proud of it, his father was a Surgical Consultant at the Glasgow Victoria Infirmary, and his two brothers also became Consultant Surgeons. He trained in Glasgow where he was a Surgical Registrar and subsequently obtaining his fellowship of the Edinburgh College of Surgeons. During this spell in Glasgow to further his education, he was sent to the Lahey Clinic in the United States for 18 months. This he found an invaluable experience and was where he made a number of life long friends.

On his return, Colin obtained a Senior Registrar post in the SW of England, initially at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, then at Southmead Hospital & subsequently, the BRI. As he was by then an experienced Senior Registrar he was seconded as a Senior Lecturer to the University of Khartoum in Sudan, and during this period he was able to complete some research, which later provided him with a thesis for his Mastership of Surgery. Having completed his training he was appointed a Consultant at Frenchay Hospital in 1968. He soon built up a reputation for being a Surgeon who was not only an excellent clinician but also a very dexterous operator - the two don't always go together! If ever I had a clinical problem I, and many others, would consult Colin and we always went away with sound advice or practical help. When my wife developed abdominal pain at 7 months in her 3<sup>rd</sup> pregnancy, it was to Colin that I turned, and his surgery saved the life of my wife, and that of our son, who was born 2 months later.

He was a member and later a president of the Moynihan Chirurgical Travelling Club and enjoyed travelling the world, building as he did a network of surgical friends around the globe. He was past president of

The Surgical Club of SW England and the Colston Research Society. I think his earlier experience in the Sudan had whetted his appetite and stimulated his interest in teaching. He was for some years an examiner for the Edinburgh Fellowship, and he never lost the opportunity of stressing to me that the Edinburgh College of Surgeons was the senior College having been established in 1505, while the College of Surgeons of England was not founded until 1745! His housemen, SHO's and registrars, many from overseas, all valued their stay on his firm. Coming from London in 1970, I was impressed to see how frequently Colin was prepared to stand on the other side of the operating table, and assist at first hand, his junior colleagues. Something that was very rare in London at that time! Certainly I could not have wished for a better or a more supportive colleague.

Not only was he a skilled surgeon, he was an excellent committeeman and served on all the important committees at Frenchay, and also on the Area Health Authority, dispensing good common sense. There was little that happened in Frenchay, or indeed in Bristol that he didn't know about, and he would on occasions stop me in the Hospital corridor, take me aside, and say 'I just want to mark your card!' By that he meant, 'Roy, you may not hear this for 6 months, but I'm acquainting you with the facts now!' After he retired in 1990, I was never as well informed!

In the Eighties, NME an American organisation decided to build a brand new state of the art private hospital in Bristol. While doing this they recruited a Medical Advisory Steering Group and asked Colin to chair it. He was keen that it should have all the modern facilities including an ITU, which the other private hospitals didn't possess. When it opened, the hospital was named The Glen and as Colin, a Scot, was still chairman of the committee, he got the nickname 'The Monarch of the Glen!'

He certainly worked hard, but he also had many interests outside of surgery - possibly because his father had been a doctor, he had a real interest in the History of Medicine, and was a member of the local Medical History Society. When he was at Rugby School, he had been an athlete particularly a long distance runner, and he was also a keen racquets player. He retained an interest in rugby football after he left school and at the time of the 6 Nations tournament, and in particular on the day of the Calcutta Cup, if Scotland won, I could guarantee within seconds of the final whistle that my phone would ring, and Colin would be on the line, 'commiserating' with me over the result! He was a golfer and a long-standing member of the Bristol & Clifton Club, and at one time had been a single handicap player. He was keen on game shooting, and for many years during the appropriate season I would get the occasional request to cover his patients, as he would take a regular days holiday to

down the odd pheasant! He was a member and subsequently Captain of the shoot at Studley. He was also a member of Probus and a Green feather member of the Savages as well as being a keen gardener. After his retirement, St Brandon's school at Clevedon, of which he was a Governor, ran into financial difficulties. With his organisational abilities he was persuaded to become Chairman of the Board, and with his efforts, a satisfactory conclusion was reached.

Colin, as you know, had a mischievous sense of humour and loved pulling his friend's legs, and we in turn would try our best to put one over on him! Occasionally one of his junior team would try and pull a fast one on him, but he would usually see it coming, and would fix the young doctor with a steely gaze and reply "Young man / lady, I didnae come down the Clyde on a banana skin"! Whereupon everyone would collapse with laughter! Colin led a very full life and achieved so much. He was an active member and an Elder of the United Reform Church in Cranbrook Road, and when that closed he became a member of this church.

Finally, Colin was totally committed to his family. He was happily married to Ena for over 54 years. They married on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 1953, American Independence Day - Colin subsequently joked that this was the day that he gave up his independence! They have 4 daughters and 9 grandchildren, whom he adored. In addition he had an extended family of relatives and close friends. Colin & Ena were very generous with their hospitality, and I can remember various family functions - for instance, the girl's weddings and his Golden Wedding celebration, which were such joyous occasions and in which he took such pleasure. He was, of course very upset by Rosemary's serious illness and when she was eventually transferred to a Leonard Cheshire Home, he immediately threw himself into raising money for the charity, which has given Rosemary such marvellous care over the last 9 years.

My family and I are immensely grateful to him for his friendship and many acts of kindness over the last 37 years, too numerous to mention. Our hearts go out to Ena and her family at this time, and we hope that their sadness will be eased to a degree by the many happy memories that they must have of this very charismatic man.

**Roy May.**