

A life well lived

Bruce Halliday MD, CCFP(LM), FCFP (1926–2011)

Barbara Kermode-Scott

If one sign of a life well lived is how many other lives you have touched, then Ontario family physician Bruce Halliday truly lived his life exceedingly well.

Dr Halliday passed away at his home in Tavistock, Ont, on January 1, 2011, surrounded by his family. A devoted husband, father, and grandfather, he will be greatly missed by his second wife, Elizabeth Vander Spek; his children, Kathryn (as well as her husband, Dan, and daughter, Lydia), Mark, and Andrea; and by numerous other family members. Doc Halliday, as he was affectionately known, will also be fondly remembered by his many friends, former patients, and constituents, as well as by his numerous medical, community, and political colleagues.

Dr Halliday received his medical degree from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto in Ontario in 1951. After a 1-year internship at Toronto Western Hospital in 1952, the young Dr Halliday became a founding partner of the Tavistock Family Health Centre. After serving as secretary of the Ontario College of Family Physicians (OCFP), he became president in 1967, and served as National president from 1971 to 1972. Dr Halliday was also honoured as Family Physician of the Year in 1975.

In 1974, Dr Halliday was elected to the House of Commons as a Progressive Conservative member for Ontario's Oxford riding. He was re-elected 4 times before retiring from politics in 1993.

Dr Reg Perkin, Executive Director of the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) from 1985 to 1996, says he has many good memories of Dr Halliday: "Bruce was greatly loved and respected by all who knew him. Always the perfect gentleman, he had a huge number of friends in both medical and political circles ... He lived a very full and productive life. He will not be forgotten."

Dr Halliday officiated at the opening of the College's new offices at 2630 Skymark Avenue in Mississauga, Ont, on November 29, 1991. "There was only one government person on my list to do the official opening, and that was Bruce Halliday," says Dr Perkin. "Bruce was so loyal to the CFPC and OCFP that he turned up at event after event over the years, right up until the middle of 2010 when his failing health prevented it."

This highly respected family physician and politician will be greatly missed, agrees the CFPC's Executive Director and CEO, Dr Cal Gutkin:

Bruce Halliday was truly a voice of family medicine—as a family doctor in his local community of Tavistock, in his leadership role as president of our College both

in Ontario and nationally, and as an MP in Ottawa. Throughout his retirement years, Bruce never missed an opportunity to share with all publics the message of the essential role of the family physician and the discipline of family medicine in our health care system. He will be missed, but his impact will live on.



Dr Halliday was fully committed to his community, to public service, and to Canada, as well as to his patients. He was a member of the Rotary Club of Tavistock for 54 years, and served on many committees, including as Chair of the Tavistock Public School Board and the Oxford County Board of Education.

Dr Perkin explains that Bruce Halliday was also devoted to his first wife, Janet McGhie, who contracted polio soon after they were married and sadly passed away in 1983. Dr Halliday did all he could to help Janet with her daily activities, and developed a lifelong interest in helping people with disabilities. As a Member of Parliament, he took a special interest in health and disability issues. During his time in government, Dr Halliday chaired the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons, and received an award from the Speaker of the House of Commons in recognition of his efforts to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Jan Kasperski, Executive Director and CEO of the OCFP, says Dr Halliday will be missed. Personally, she will forever remember "the twinkle in his eye." She points out that Dr Halliday was one of the first presidents of the Ontario College and was very loyal to his Chapter:

Regardless of the roles Bruce took on at the National College or in Parliament, his heart remained with the OCFP. He provided us with guidance and advice that kept us on track and reminded us of our core values as family physicians and as a College—right up to the last moments of his life.

Doc Halliday touched the lives of many and will be greatly missed.

Barbara Kermode-Scott is a freelance writer based in Calgary, Alta.