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Douglas Harold Copp
1915-1998

Douglas Harold Copp died peacefully at home in Vancouver, British Columbia on March 17, 1998 after many years of having leukemia. He was born on January 16, 1915 in Toronto, Ontario, the son of a family physician, and from an early age was highly motivated to follow in his father's footsteps. His undergraduate and graduate education took place at the University of Toronto where he received the M.D. degree with honors and the Faculty Gold Medal in 1939. Further training began in Europe where, with the onset of World War II, he returned to North America and joined the University of California at Berkeley (UCB), where he received a Ph.D. in biochemistry in 1943, remaining at UCB as an assistant professor until 1950. It was during his time at UCB that he became involved in the Manhattan Project and began to work in bone biology because of the interests in how the products of nuclear fission accumulated in bone. He then moved to the University of British Columbia as the founding head of the Department of Physiology in the newly emerging medical school of the University of British Columbia, where he remained in that leadership role until 1980.

Harold Copp's lifelong work involved the endocrine control of plasma calcium in a wide variety of piscine and mammalian species. This lifelong commitment was highlighted by the discovery of the hormone calcitonin in 1961, and Harold Copp's group not only isolated, but subsequently sequenced and synthesized, salmon calcitonin in a very brief time in 1969.

At the time of his so-called retirement, the building housing the physiology department at the University of British Columbia, was named the D. Harold Copp Building, but Harold Copp really never ceased his active research pursuits. His interests remained in the comparative endocrinology of calcium regulation and it was in his post-retirement period that he and colleagues were responsible for identifying yet another hormone regulating plasma calcium in bony fish, which was given the name teleocalcin. He continued to teach and was a major attraction to both undergraduate medical students, as well as graduate students in both physiology and bio-chemistry.

Harold Copp served on the Farquharson Committee whose report in 1959 led directly to the creation of the Medical Research Council of Canada. It was a crucial step in fostering the development of medical research in Canada and during its early period, his commitment to scientific excellence and service helped shape this important granting body on the Canadian scene. It was because of this that the Medical Research Council in 1996 endowed the D. Harold Copp Lectureship at the University of British Columbia in recognition of his extraordinary and varied contributions to the

University of British Columbia, to Canada in general and internationally. I personally considered him to be one of Canada's most important biomedical scientists.

Harold Copp was the recipient of many awards and distinctions, among them, the Gairdner Foundation Annual Award, and the first gold medalist of the Science Council of British Columbia. He received honorary degrees from Queens and Acadia Universities and from the Universities of Toronto, Ottawa, and British Columbia. He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1959 and Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1971, and was awarded the Medal of Service of the Order of Canada in 1971, becoming an Officer and then a Companion of the Order of Canada. He had an outstanding record of accomplishment as a basic scientist, as a skilled administrator, as a teacher, mentor and advisor to many. Harold Copp was an articulate individual who loved to talk about world history, politics, sex and many other things, and always had a strong opinion and enjoyed the company of others with much laughter. He taught many the importance of the work ethic and the love and wonderment of science and showed a strong example of how to deal with the criticisms that emerge from one's competitors within science. In this day where intellectual property is valued so highly, I well recall Harold's defense of his never considering the patenting of calcitonin. He felt that money just was not as important as some people perceived as long as one had enough to get along.

Harold Copp is survived by his wife and three daughters and many nieces and nephews.