



Edward Shelton Henderson MD Chemotherapy Pioneer July 19, 1932 to June 24, 2020

T. Andrew Lister¹ · Jerome W. Yates² · Robert Peter Gale³

Received: 5 November 2020 / Revised: 24 November 2020 / Accepted: 25 November 2020 / Published online: 15 December 2020
© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Limited 2020



Prof. Edward Shelton Henderson (he preferred Ed) who died on June 24 age 87, was a pioneer in the then nascent field of haematological cancers, especially leukaemias. Ed was born in Southern California in 1932. His undergraduate

studies were at Stanford where he also graduated from the medical school in 1956. He completed training in Internal Medicine and Haematology at the Los Angeles General Hospital (now the Los Angeles, USC Medical Centre) and at the Univ. Southern California where he studied with Samuel I. Rapaport and Jesse Steinfeld. In 1961 he joined the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in Bethesda, MD along with a highly talented group of young investigators under the direction of Profs. Emil (Tom) Frei III, Emil (Jay) Freireich and David Rall. His talent was soon apparent, and he became Chief of the Leukaemia Service in the Medicine Branch of the NCI. During his 12 year tenure, Ed was involved in breakthroughs in the therapy of leukaemias, especially acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL). These advances, with those of others at the time, particularly Alvin Mauer, Joseph Simone and Donald Pinkel, contributed to the present 90 percent cure rate of children with ALL—one of the great success stories in modern cancer therapy. Taking a short break Ed climbed the Matterhorn.

In 1973 Ed was recruited by Prof. Gerald Murphy as head of the Medicine A at Roswell Park Memorial Institute (RPMI, now Roswell Park Cancer Institute [RPCI]) in Buffalo, New York. He replaced Prof. James Holland who had transferred to the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. Buffalo winters must have been a shock to someone from Ventura, California who had likely never seen snow before. That's dedication!

At RPCI Ed fostered a multi-disciplinary approach to research designed to improve the outcome of diverse cancers but with a focus on leukaemias. Importantly, he encouraged collaboration between clinical and basic scientists, especially pharmacologists. He was an important participant in Cancer and Acute Leukemia Group B (CALGB), the 1st US cooperative cancer clinical trials group headed at that time by Frei and Holland.

Ed's trainees including Robert Mayer, John Glick, Stuart Siegal, Marc Lippman, Robert Young, Arthur Levine, Alan Schreiber and Robert Gallo have been in the forefront of modern haematology and oncology.

✉ Robert Peter Gale
robertpetergale@alumni.ucla.ed

¹ Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, UK

² SUNY at Buffalo and Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Imperial College London, London, UK

³ Imperial College London, London, UK

Among Ed's accomplishments are 183 journal articles, 23 textbook chapters, editor of 5 textbooks. He was on the editorial boards of many journals. In addition to the State Univ. of New York at Buffalo he held faculty positions at George Washington and Georgetown Universities.

Ed was a critical thinker and stimulating teacher. Mild mannered, always a gentleman, he remained calm at scientific meetings but did not hesitate to let you know when he disagreed with your conclusion. He was driven by science without any touch of puffery, traits which may seem anachronistic today.

After retiring from academic medicine in 1987 Ed brought his considerable skill and knowledge to his later years spent firstly at the FDA as a senior medical advisor and then as a physician at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Buffalo. Somehow, he must have become conditioned to snow or perhaps the draw was Buffalo chicken wings at the Anchor Bar on Main Street (RPCI is next door). We are uncertain which is more famous, RPCI or the Anchor Bar, probably the latter. In 2010 he came to his senses and returned to Santa Barbara realizing Buffalo chicken wings can be FEDEXed (although with an explosives warning).

Although it is thirty years since he withdrew from Academia, Ed will continue to be respected by those who came into contact with him for his ability to speak with quiet authority and to stimulate on the challenges posed in improving therapy for haematological cancers. He was especially impressive in workshops at setting the perspective succinctly, and also for the skill with which he interpreted and sometimes questioned the data of his friends and peers. Ed always found time, in both formal and informal settings to listen to, engage and encourage those junior to him, being generous with his advice. His other great contribution was, with Fred Gunz, the transformation of *Damashek's Leukemia* into one of the first authoritative multi-author textbooks covering all aspects of 'the disease, making it an invaluable reference in the time before the internet.

Ed loved music. He played guitar and sang in the shower (with *multa forza*) and supported classical music including

the Buffalo symphony orchestra, the Santa Barbara chamber music orchestra (Camerata Pacifica) and the Music Academy of the West. He and his wife were frequent attendees of the Los Angeles opera under Placido Domingo. Ed was a docent at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden where he led children's tours and was often seen setting off with a gaggle of 5-year olds. And he loved to travel, even when he had to pay—a rare trait amongst academics. Retirement agreed with him.

Ed was not only intellectually stimulating, he was fun to be with. Diffident by nature, with a wry smile, he was a born raconteur and conversationalist. At his best at the table, whether over abalone beachside near Santa Barbara, soft shell crabs in Georgetown or by a barbeque on the Wilsede Heide, he would entertain with a twinkle in his eye. For those of us who were lucky enough to count him as a friend, he will not only be appreciated for his contribution to our field, but sadly missed and fondly remembered for his scientific insights and the pleasure of his company.

Ed is survived by his former wife Barbara Wuenschmann Henderson, his wife Carolyn Kincaid, three daughters, a son and nine grandchildren.

Acknowledgements George Canellos (Dana-Farber Cancer Inst.), Ronald Yankee, Bruce Chabner (Massachusetts General Hosp.), Michael Barnett (Univ. British Columbia), Dieter Hoelzer (Univ. Frankfurt), Mel Greaves (Inst. Cancer Research UK), Magnus Björkholm (Karolinska Univ. Hosp.), Tiziano Barbui (Ospedale Papa Giovanni XXIII), Ama Rohatiner (Barts) and Renato Bassan (Ospedale dell'Angelo) kindly provided input. We are very grateful to many of Ed's friends and colleagues for their insight into him and his contribution to our field.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest RPG is a consultant to BeiGene Ltd., Fusion Pharma LLC, LaJolla NanoMedical Inc., Mingsight Pharmaceuticals Inc. and CStone Pharmaceuticals. Advisor: Antegene Biotech LLC, Medical Director: FFF Enterprises Inc. Partner: AZACA Inc. Board of Directors: RakFond Foundation for Cancer Research Support. Scientific Advisory Board: StemRad Ltd.

Publisher's note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.