Gift Honours Family Ties to UBC

“My father used to say, ‘I am who I am because my great-great grandmother crossed herself with two fingers,’” says Alexandra Volkoff. “It meant she was one of the old believers who were persecuted in Russia. When liberation came, she understood that education was important. She taught herself to read using the Bible, and she taught her family to read. Everyone in the family since then has been aware of the value of education.”

As an alumna who graduated in 1971 (BA), Alexandra feels that UBC has been a part of her life from first to last. In fact, the Volkoff history is so entrenched with the University there’s even a street named after them on campus. Volkoff Lane was named to honour Alexandra’s father, Dr. George Volkoff, a distinguished theoretical physicist and second Dean of Science at UBC—the first was her mother’s brother.

“My father came here as a penniless student,” says Alexandra. “And my mother and her older brothers also went to UBC. That’s where my parents met. All my siblings and cousins have attended. We grew up close to campus—it was our playground, and now I am retired and live on campus.”

As a student, Alexandra excelled academically and earned a scholarship that allowed her to go abroad to study in her third year, an experience she says opened her eyes to other cultures and ways of thinking. She also wrote for the official student newspaper—the Ubyssey, which later led to a stint as a correspondent in Iran.

“I always planned to leave something to the University,” says Alexandra. “When it was time to create my gift, I thought long and hard about whether I would contribute to an existing scholarship or create my own. There are so many gifts that match a variety of interests, even several established by my family. But in the end, I decided to create my own.”

Continued on page 2
Alexandra will establish and endow two awards that reflect her personal passions—opera and international learning—using funds from her life insurance as well as a gift in her will. “My financial planner advised that leaving a life insurance policy would result in a much more substantial gift that would provide ongoing support to students. It was a painless way to create a significant gift, and I encourage others to consider it.”

The Alexandra Volkoff Award in Opera will be presented annually to an outstanding singer studying opera in the Voice & Opera Division at the School of Music while the Alexandra Volkoff Global Citizenship Award will be available to students participating in international service learning programs at the University. “I have always believed that there are only three things you can give children,” says Alexandra. “That’s love, food, and education. The rest is irrelevant.”

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(continued from page 1)

UBC is honoured to acknowledge the generosity and kindness of the following people who, in the past year, left a bequest to the university upon their passing:

**With Appreciation**

Jeanette Louise Andrews
Timothy Chris Brayshaw
Stewart Cecil Clark
Margaret (Peggy) Clarkson
Neil Baldwin Cole
Moira Dawson
Elizabeth (Betty) Done
Jean Mabel Fisher
Raymond Claude Godfrey
Stanley Matthew Grant
Marjorie Phoebe Hilda Hamilton
Wilfred Cameron
Hardcastle
Helen Ruth Hemspsall
Dorothy Elizabeth (Betty) Hilton
Honor Flora Jones
Philip (Phil) A Jones
Anne Marie Kaplan
Edward Jacklin (Jack) Kermod
Thomas Campbell Kinloch
Anna Ruth Leith
Evelyn Pauline Long
Alexander Norbert (Norb) MacDonald
Rachel Mary Mackenzie
Mahmoud Aly Manzalouhi
Calvin Joseph Lee Marin
Evelyn Joyous Mosher
Gwendelyne Ethel Moya
Norman Moya
Muriel Neice
Barbara L Opperman
Sheila Diane Petrie
James William Phelps
Dorothy Anna Proudfoot
Aileen Sheilagh Rennie
Violet Mae Sherman
Gladyis Sherlock
Christopher Spencer
Hilary Stewart
Rosemary Stewart
Zoltan Tallan
Rachel Belmore Toombs
Margaret-Anne Turner
Bruce Park Wallace
Edmund Theodore Wong
Miriam Zbarsky

As Dean of the Faculty of Forestry, Dr. John Innes has dedicated his career to advancing sustainable forest management practices. He is a big proponent for working with Aboriginal communities on forestry issues and has dedicated considerable energy to this area. However, it was simply the desire to create a more equitable society that inspired John and Jill Innes to make a generous estate gift to enhance the recently established John and Jill Innes Aboriginal Award in Forestry.

“Today, there is greater recognition of what constitutes fairness and equality in our society. We anticipate more and more land in Canada being returned to indigenous groups. As this happens, it will become imperative to foster relationships and work even more closely with these communities.”

For example, the Faculty is taking a leadership role in collaboration with Applied Science and the Sauder School of Business to establish a group of experts who will be available as a resource for First Nations communities.

The John and Jill Innes Aboriginal Award in Forestry will be offered to Aboriginal students in the undergraduate program. Preference will be given to those who demonstrate leadership, and the awards are renewable for up to three years. This award demonstrates a level of commitment to the direction we’re taking within the Faculty,” states John. “And I think that’s important.”
The Founders and Futurists of UBC Medicine

As two of the founding faculty members of the UBC Faculty of Medicine, Dr. Sydney Friedman (1916-2015) and Dr. Constance Livingstone-Friedman (1920-2011) contributed to UBC for over 60 years. They were outstanding educators who supported the University through their pioneering work as well as many generous gifts and donations. In 2016, UBC received the Friedman’s largest gift from their estate, one which has made an indelible impact on their legacy at UBC.

Sydney and Constance both attended medical school and were PhD graduates of McGill, where they met. They married in 1940 and taught in the department of anatomy for almost ten years. In 1950, their lives would change course. They were invited as the first faculty appointments of the new medical school at the University of British Columbia and embarked on a cross-country adventure to their new home.

“UBC Medicine had very humble beginnings: when Sydney and Constance arrived, they initially used two repurposed army huts,” said Al Boggie, director of the Friedman Foundation. “It is an amazing tribute to their hard work that, over the next thirty years, UBC Medicine grew from that into a truly world-class education and research program with connections around the world.”

Sydney and Constance both dedicated their lives to UBC Medicine, to create a school that would provide students with a world class institution,” said Roseane McIndoe of the Friedman Foundation. “The Foundation was delighted to be able to dedicate their estate to extending their legacy—to ensure that UBC Medicine could continue to expand and contribute, just as they had done during their lives.”

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Sydney held the position of Professor and Department Head in the Department of Anatomy (1950-1981), while Constance taught Anatomy and Histology classes to medical and dental students (1950-1985). Together, they published more than 200 research papers on salt and hypertension. Sydney, who was a talented artist and often impressed students with his ambidextrous renderings of anatomy, would also publish the three volume Visual Anatomy series, a definitive collection still used by students and professionals around the world.

Over their careers at UBC, the Friedmans would touch the lives of thousands of medical and dentistry students. As dedicated teachers, they passionately believed in the power of education and often supported their convictions out of pocket, generously donating not just to UBC Medicine but to other parts of UBC and organizations that had touched them during their time at UBC.

For instance, when Constance passed away in 2011, Sydney donated her collection of art and jewellery—11 pieces created by famed Haida artist Bill Reid—to UBC’s Museum of Anthropology. The collection, assessed at over $500,000, held many fine examples of Reid’s early work. Constance had cherished these pieces in life, and wanted them placed in the museum where everyone could enjoy them.

As a tribute to Constance, Sydney created a charitable foundation and established the Drs. Sydney and Constance Friedman Travel Award to honour her strong belief that a broader perspective gained through travel makes a better physician. The travel awards go to graduating MDs to be used before their residencies. Similar thinking was behind the Friedman Award for Scholars in Health, an award that Sydney later shaped during several conversations with Friedman Foundation Director and close friend Chuck Slonecker. Each year, up to four scholarships of $25,000 to $50,000 are awarded to allow graduate students in

Health sciences or medical residents to pursue learning opportunities in other areas of the world, for six or more months of study, to seek new perspectives and learn from experts in their fields.

Sydney was touched by the impact of these awards on students. He often mentioned to friends how much he enjoyed seeing the effects of his philanthropy in action. It was shortly after that he tasked the foundation with using the proceeds of his estate to benefit UBC.

The largest part of their estate was the Friedman home. Designed by Dr. Frederic Lasserre (the first Head of the UBC School of Architecture) with landscaping by the iconic Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, the house is generally regarded as a stunning example of West Coast modernism. The Foundation recently sold the home to a young family who intend to preserve its unique cultural legacy.

In 2015, Sydney passed away, just a day short of his 99th birthday. The proceeds from the sale of his home, which had dramatically increased in value since its construction in 1953, resulted in an incredible gift to UBC that will have a far greater impact than either he or Constance ever dreamed.

Significant estate funds were contributed to endow the Friedman Award for Scholars in Health and the Friedman Travel Award in perpetuity. The Friedman Award for Scholars in Health has already taken more than a dozen UBC students to institutions around the world, where they are studying everything from genetic abnormalities to assistive technologies for people with disabilities. Such experiences have had an indelible impact on student education—not to mention on other institutions, and, in future, on patients across BC and around the world. And now, with the estate proceeds, more students will gain these valuable experiences that will broaden their education.

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All photos courtesy of the UBC Library Archives

Photo courtesy of Michael Perlmuter from the book House of Friedman

Photo courtesy of WOZIE FRIEDMAN
Supporting Spinal Cord Research Becomes a Family Affair

It’s difficult to imagine finding the courage to think about others when faced with a life altering injury, but that’s just the sort of person Allan Northrop was. After sustaining a significant spinal cord injury that left him paralyzed from the chest down, Allan named UBC as the beneficiary of his RRSP and TFSAs, a generous and thoughtful act that he hoped would benefit spinal cord research.

When Allan passed away from complications related to his condition in 2013, his siblings—Colin Northrop, Edna Combet, Mike Northrop, Linda Ellwood, and Phillip Northrop—came together to honor Allan’s memory. They decided to divide his inheritance among his siblings—almost $150,000 each—and use the proceeds to support spinal cord research at UBC.

“We knew about his gift to UBC, and it seemed like the right thing to do,” says Linda. “We thought that’s what he would have wanted,” says Phillip. “He enjoyed traveling and was an accomplished recreational cyclist. Sadly, that’s what led to the injury. In 1999, he fell while trying to avoid a pedestrian who stepped into his path.”

Despite the tremendous challenges he would face, Allan continued to live independently in his own home. He grew vegetables in his garden and adopted a frugal existence that allowed him to invest his savings. His hope was to one day make a significant gift to spinal cord research.

“That’s just what Allan was like,” says Linda. “Even after the accident, he rarely asked for help. He was a creative thinker. He’d figure out how to do things and then go ahead and do them. He even raised the beds in his garden, so he could get around in his wheelchair.”

“Allan chose UBC as the recipient of his gift, because he trusted the university,” says Phillip. “He knew that a cure probably wasn’t something that would happen in his lifetime, but he thought maybe he could help someone like himself in the future. That’s what he hoped. Even if it was too late for him, he knew a discovery would eventually come—and it will.”

No Health Without Brain Health: Seven Ways to Keep Mentally Fit

by Dr. Raymond Lam

Although our brain controls all aspects of our daily lives, it still remains a mystery. We do not understand much of how the brain functions normally, never mind in brain diseases and disorders. That is why brain research is so important.

The Djavad Mowafaghian Centre for Brain Health at UBC, run jointly by the University of British Columbia and Vancouver Coastal Health, holds clinics for people with Alzheimer’s, mood disorders, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, and other brain disorders. The hope is that the centre will share both clinical and research facilities to truly integrate laboratory and clinical neuroscience with a common goal to bring the latest in brain science to the people suffering from these conditions.

Until these mysteries are unlocked, many simple activities can help promote neurogenesis and improve brain health.

1. Exercise your body. Many studies show that cardiovascular exercise increases neurogenesis and improves memory and mood. Brain scans done after weight training also found increased activity in the brain areas involved with memory. But check with your doctor or physiotherapist first before beginning vigorous exercise.

2. Exercise your brain. In the tradition of “use it or lose it,” regular brain activity helps to maintain brain health. Read, take a class, do a sudoku. There are fancy new computer games that claim to increase your brain power, but research will show whether they are better than simply doing your crossword.

3. Sleep well. There is a lot of scientific evidence that a good night’s sleep for seven to nine hours improves health, memory and mood. Keeping to regular sleep and wake times, having a consistent bedtime routine, and avoiding light before bed time can all help to ensure a restful, healthy sleep.

4. Talk to a friend. Fulfilling social relationships can protect against dementia and depression, so cultivate your friends and family.

5. Eat “Mediterranean style.” A Mediterranean diet rich in antioxidants not only helps your heart, it can also be good for your brain. Your diet should be high in legumes (beans, peas, lentils, soybeans, etc.), vegetables, fruits and unrefined cereals, moderate in fish and dairy products, and low in meat. Oh, and moderate use of olive oil and red wine helps make this adjustment easier.

6. Challenge yourself. Whether mentally or physically, work to a goal slightly beyond your current capability. Reaching for the stars may not be realistic, but challenging your goals can activate your brain and body.

And finally,

7. Appreciate beauty. After all, why live longer with a healthy brain if all you do is think?

Dr. Raymond Lam is a professor of psychiatry at the University of British Columbia and medical director of the Mood Disorders Clinic at the Djavad Mowafaghian Centre for Brain Health in Vancouver. He has written nine books on depression, including A Clinician’s Guide to Using Light Therapy by Cambridge University Press.

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The opportunity for US retirees to make a tax-free transfer of up to $100,000 per year from their Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) to a public charity like The University of British Columbia or The American Foundation for The University of British Columbia is now permanent.

After years of uncertainty, the Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) was extended permanently under budget legislation enacted in December 2015—and the certainty has given retirees a reliable tool for tax planning. Here are the details:

- Donors must be at least 70 ½ years old on the date of the gift.
- Funds must be transferred directly from an IRA to The University of British Columbia or The American Foundation for The University of British Columbia.
- The key benefit is keeping donated dollars out of the adjusted gross income reported on your tax return, as would happen if you donated by first taking an IRA distribution. (Donors cannot also claim an income tax deduction for the gift.) Higher adjusted gross income could push you into a higher marginal income tax bracket. But it also can increase taxation of your Social Security benefit, or trigger the high income surcharges on Medicare Part B premiums paid by some seniors.
- The gift can count toward the IRA owner’s required minimum distribution, which can be helpful for IRA owners who don’t need the distributions to meet living expenses.
- Your gift must be made by December 31, 2016 to qualify this year.

To learn more about making a gift to UBC through your IRA, please contact us – see below.