Glen Harrison Lowther had a profound effect on the lives of the thousands of patients he cared for, and his legacy continues. Raised and educated in Glasgow, this proud Scot basked in the poetry, history, landscape, and music of his homeland. His childhood vacation spot of Tarbert, Loch Fyne, was his most cherished memory, so much so that he continued to visit Tarbert on every trip to Scotland.

After graduating from the University of Glasgow, he spent a year working in internal medicine and psychiatry at Glasgow’s teaching hospitals before going into the Royal Army Medical Corps. While at university he was president of the student union and a prize winning debater. According to family folklore, his most famous speech advised students, “If work gets in the way of the corporate life of the university, then work must go!”

He emigrated to Manitoba, Canada, in 1952 and joined the staff of what is now the Manitoba Developmental Centre, first as clinical director, then medical superintendent, and then provincial director of mental retardation services. During his years of service in this area he was recognised as the “initiator” of community residences—with the first one in Canada opening in Portage la Prairie and aptly named KIN-GLEN (the “kin” for the Kinsmen Club, which raised funds for the home, and “GLEN” recognising the man responsible for this new development). There are now thousands of such residences throughout Canada and the US. Lowther’s contribution in the area of community services for people with developmental delays can be best summarised by a public statement made by the former governor general of Canada, the Right Honourable Edward Richard Schreyer, who, when he was premier of Manitoba, said “Dr Lowther is the best thing that has happened to mental retardation in the history of Manitoba.”

After over 30 years of caring for patients with developmental disabilities and providing psychiatric services for the local community, Glen took up psychiatric practice at the Misericordia General Hospital, where he later became head of the Department of Psychiatry. Over the following 30 years, Glen maintained a mix of hospital and community based practice. He provided psychiatric consultation and ongoing psychiatric counselling services to patients of the Salvation Army crisis unit, the mobile crisis team, the Northern Medical Services Unit (a fly-in psychiatric service for indigenous people in northern and remote areas of the province); on-call services at the emergency departments at St Boniface, Grace, and Misericordia hospitals; and he was a member of the mental health review board.

Unusually for the modern time, Glen was a doctor who never considered himself to be truly off duty; he was devoted to the people in his care and would respond to their needs at any time of the day or night. All his patients had his home phone and cell numbers.

As assistant professor of psychiatry, Glen taught students in medicine and medical rehabilitation, special education and social work at the University of Manitoba.

Glen’s private life revolved around his love for his family, travel, and the arts. He made regular trips to see his brother, Tony, and family in Scotland, and he enjoyed countless trips to visit family as well as numerous countries. He enjoyed travelling the world with his family, and together they scuba dived, parasailed, and surfed the oceans. He braved the camping world during horrific weather, but his favourite refuge was the cottage at West Hawk, where he loved to go boating and water ski (until the age of 84!). He was an avid supporter of the Winnipeg arts scene as a patron of the symphony, ballet, opera, and the philharmonic choir. His love of music was apparent at home, where he often listened to his extensive collection of classical and Scottish music. He was an avid reader, a poet, and a slayer of crosswords. As the president and life member of the St Andrew’s Society, he was known to enjoy a wee dram or two of Scotch.

Glen leaves Marjorie, his wife and partner of 40 years; their daughter; two sons (one a doctor); a daughter from his previous marriage; five grandchildren; two great grandchildren; nieces and nephews on both sides of the ocean. His beloved brother, Tony, also a doctor, died in Scotland just five weeks after Glen’s passing.

Glen will always be remembered as a kind and giving man and was called legendary more than once in his lifetime. In the words of one of his former patients: “We’ll miss you, Dr. Lowther, you special, good man—you personify grandly the best of your clan.”

Biography

Attending psychiatrist Misericordia Hospital, Winnipeg, Canada (b 1926; q Glasgow 1949), died from unspecified progressive pulmonary disease on 25 June 2019