

Anne AUTOR – VHS Class of 1952



January 26, 1935 - November 13, 2018

AUTOR, Anne Pomeroy (Ph.D)

Vancouver resident and UBC Professor Emerita, Dr. Anne Pomeroy Autor, 83, died peacefully on November 13, 2018 of complications from Alzheimer's.

Dr. Autor was born Dorothy Anne Pomeroy on January 26, 1935, in Prince George, BC, but preferred and used the name Anne most of her life. Her father, Alfred J. Pomeroy, was a constable in the BC Provincial Police and later sergeant in the RCMP. Her mother, Mary B. Pomeroy (née Green), was a school teacher whose family first came to Vancouver in the 1880s and were pioneers in the Province.

As a consequence of her father's police service, Dr. Autor spent her childhood in several small towns and cities throughout the Province, including Sechelt, Fernie, Vernon, Port Alberni, and Nanaimo, before the family settled in Victoria. She attended Victoria High School and Victoria College (now the University of Victoria) before transferring to the University of British Columbia. Determined to be a scientist from the age of 13, she received a B.A. with Honours and a Master of Science in biochemistry. While a graduate student at UBC, she married Kent Autor of Anchorage, Alaska, in March 1957, and had two children. They divorced in 1978.

After shuttling between Vancouver and Anchorage, Dr. Autor moved with her family to Durham, North Carolina in 1962. There she resumed her studies at Duke University as the only woman in the doctoral programme in biochemistry. After completing her Ph.D. in 1970, she was awarded a post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Biological Chemistry at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. In 1972, she received her first faculty appointment at the Biochemical Toxicology Center in the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Supported by grants from the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Damon Runyon Foundation, and the prestigious March of Dimes Basil O'Connor Starter Scholar Research Grant Award, her research focused on the biochemical mechanisms of oxygen toxicity, on which she authored numerous scientific papers and published two books.

Dr. Autor left Iowa in 1983 to return to Vancouver as a tenured Professor at UBC in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and a clinical researcher at St. Paul's Hospital. In addition to her university and hospital laboratories, she also opened the first DNA forensic lab in the Province and worked closely with the RCMP.

Throughout her career, Dr. Autor travelled extensively around the world as a guest lecturer and visiting professor during sabbaticals in research laboratories in Carshalton Surrey (UK), Basel (Switzerland), and Cape Town (South Africa). After her retirement from UBC in 2000, she received an appointment as an adjunct professor to teach pathology at the medical school at Al Ain University of Science and Technology in the United Arab Emirates. In 2001, she was appointed professor and vice chair of the Department of Biomedical Sciences at the Aga Khan University Medical College in Karachi, Pakistan, where she developed an innovative learning curriculum for medical students. She returned to Vancouver and permanent retirement in 2004, spending time visiting her sons and grandchildren and working with her brother to co-manage the heritage family farm in Pemberton that had been their grandparents' homestead.

In her pioneering role as a woman in science, Dr. Autor considered it especially important to mentor younger women entering the profession and helped launch the careers of a large number of graduate students, both men and women. She was also active in many professional organizations, often in leadership positions, including: the Society of Toxicology (US); Society of Toxicology of Canada; the Canadian Network of Toxicology Centres; the Pacific Northwest Association of Toxicologists; the International Academy of Pathology; the American Association of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology; the Oxygen Society; the Canadian Society of Forensic Science; and the Medical Legal Society of British Columbia. As a result of her research on metabolism of drugs and toxic compounds in the human body, the BC Minister of Environment, Lands, and Parks appointed her as an advisor to the Waste Reduction Commissioner on the management of toxic substances. While in the United States, she also served as an advisor to NIH and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Outside her profession, Dr. Autor engaged in many volunteer and appointed services reflecting her wide-range of interests and active support of her community. She served on the Board of Directors of the St. Paul's Hospital Foundation; the UBC Faculty Senate; the Board of Governors of the Law Foundation of BC; as one of the first two of the Law Society's lay benchers; the Board of Trustees of the Vancouver Art Gallery; chair of the first Compensation Advisory Committee for provincial court judges under appointment by the Attorney General of British Columbia; member and volunteer streetcar driver with the Vancouver Downtown Historic Railway/Transit Museum Society, and was an active parishioner of the Christ Church Cathedral (Anglican). In 1988, she joined the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of Canada, as the first two women members of the Vancouver Round Table, a civic organization of prominent British Columbians from business, government, and academe.

A woman of great natural curiosity and eclectic pursuits, she relished foreign travel and exotic locales, reading history and literature, enjoying many different genres of music, theatre, skiing, scuba diving, horse-back riding, fly fishing, gardening, running, and swimming. While living in the UAE, she read the entire Koran. When she moved to Karachi, she made a point of trying to learn to speak Urdu, with decidedly mixed results. Rarely missing a chance to celebrate Robbie Burns Night, she was a connoisseur of fine, single-malt Scotch whisky, enjoyed on occasion with her sons and a good cigar.

Dr. Autor was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Richard J. Pomeroy of West Vancouver. She is survived by son, Kurt Autor of Wasilla, Alaska; son, Erik, daughter-in-law, Ariadne, and grandsons, Christian and Alexander Autor, of Falls Church, Virginia.

In her memory and recognition of her career in biomedical sciences, the family requests considering a donation to the Djavad Mowafaghian Centre for Brain Health through the VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation.

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