

2002 Snowbird Conference Stem cells for tolerance and tissue regeneration: In memory of Professor William H Burns

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A renaissance thinker in the age of technical and professional blinders, a compassionate empathic, humble, and thoughtful physician in an age of bureaucracy, these are the attributes for which we dedicate this conference in memory of a colleague and mentor. A friend whose soul was driven by a love of knowledge, compassion for people, and a Southern gentleman's honor to his word. A Yale and Harvard graduate, he never sought the limelight and always shied away from fame, innately discarding vanity. In his quiet and thoughtful manner, he was keenly aware of everything around him. Yet time meant nothing to him

when challenged to pursue an idea, solve a laboratory puzzle, listen to a patient, or help a friend. Intense loyalty, never showing off, but always available to explain and offer insight when asked. A stunning depth of knowledge and attachment that never ended.

When first rounding with his John Hopkins/Medical College of Wisconsin attending, fellows may be initially baffled by his down to earth nature, and then subsequently humbled by quiet genius. This hematopoietic stem cell transplant physician who was a laboratory chief, an immunologist, a virologist, a computer programmer, an astronomer, an art historian, and an opera lover who once said 'Life is a poor imitation of opera.' His home was an observatory with a telescope of hand-ground mirrors and a library of books, manuscripts, and opera. Walk through any art museum and Professor Burns captivated his company with stories of every painter and painting. In a metropolitan museum are found the *El Greco's* that hung in his aunt's home and are now on display for the public. A lover of laboratory research who would serve wine and Opera on Friday lab nights. A physician who rather than subjecting applicants to another dry interview, invited them to dinner or an evening at the Metropolitan Opera.

The depth of this gentle man can even be seen on the other side of this world in Nanjing, China, in a section of the original University hospital. There over the fireplace hangs a picture of Sun Yat-sen, the founder of modern China, more revered than any modern Chinese political figure. Next to Sun Yat-sen, himself a physician, stood a picture of William Burn's uncle, also named Bill and the cofounder of Nanjing's first hospital. So there in Nanjing far from the mentor who trained many cellular transplant physicians is memorialized yet another of numerous contributions by his family.

Willam Burns instilled the lost concept of a 'Research Program' and lived the dying art of 'Translational Research' being able to work in a lab and care for patients interchangeably advancing and benefiting both. William Burns inspired loyalty and life-long friendship. He was a teacher whose students continued his work and spirit and always returned for discussion and ideas. A gentleman of such depth that his absence from this world is deeply felt.

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