

## Remembering Daniel Charles Tosteson, M.D.

by Mitchell T. Rabkin, M.D.



Photo by John Earle

*Daniel Charles Tosteson, M.D.*

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Daniel C. Tosteson, M.D., Dean of Harvard Medical School from 1977 to 1997 and Caroline Shields Walker Distinguished Professor of Cell Biology, manifested a breadth of interest, depth of ability, and impressive achievement within his profession and beyond. Elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 1979, he served as President from 1997 to 2000 and oversaw a strategic planning initiative that has reaffirmed the mission and long-term goals of the Academy and serves as a blueprint for the Academy's research initiatives.

His 1985 restructuring of medical education at Harvard Medical School, labeled the "New Pathway," introduced a shift from students' reliance on texts and lectures taken whole to an approach that began with descriptions of patients and their illnesses and led to students' active pursuit of the questions to ask and the answers to seek – ways of developing critical thinking about disease and its underlying mechanisms. His embellishment of this problem-based learning technique, earlier forecast elsewhere, has spread across the globe.

Dr. Tosteson's most recent innovation in teaching, only several years old, is the "Mentored Clinical Casebook" project, whereby students throughout their first year follow a patient, gaining an understanding of the pathology involved, but more importantly, with the help of mentors developing insight into the impact of that pathology on the patient's physiological, emotional, social, and economic situations. The student learns the distinction between *disease* – disembodied as described in a textbook – and *illness* – that complex of the many and various interacting phenomena that impact on the individual patient.

His visionary understanding of the direction of medicine and its science led to advances scholarly, therapeutic, and practical. Dean Tosteson's establishment of the Departments of Genetics, Cell Biology, and Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology reflected prescient insight into the directions of biomedical scholarship with its unfolding discoveries in molecular biology and molecular genetics. The Biological and Biomedical Sciences program emerged out of his appreciation that the future of research lay not only in interdisciplinary understanding and collaboration among a wider range of basic scientists, but also through greater interaction between clinicians and basic scientists, connecting the bedside with the laboratory bench.

He established the Department of Health Care Policy and the Department of Social Medicine (now Global Health and Social Medicine), grew the Medical School's endowment nearly tenfold, added several new buildings and fashioned increased space within the existing buildings, expanded continuing education for practicing physicians, and created a publishing venture that offers reliable articles on health to the lay public. Appropriately, the new building designed specifically for teaching has been named the Tosteson Medical Education Center.

Concerned that growing business pressures on Harvard-affiliated hospitals were threatening their capacities for student teaching and resident training, in 1996 Dr. Tosteson formed the Institute for Education and Research, a joint program of the Medical School with Beth Israel Hospital and Mount Auburn Hospital, that over succeeding years has made significant advances in the nature

and quality of teaching and learning at the Medical School and its affiliated hospitals, and strengthened appreciation on the part of hospital trustees and administrators that quality education within the teaching hospital is a legitimate and necessary cost of doing business.

A native of Milwaukee, Dr. Tosteson was educated at Harvard College and Harvard Medical School. Following a residency at Presbyterian Hospital in New York City and fellowships at Brookhaven National Laboratory, the National Institutes of Health, and Cambridge University, he joined the faculty at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis and subsequently became the James B. Duke Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology at Duke University School of Medicine. He later became Dean of the Pritzker School of Medicine at the University of Chicago and Lowell T. Coggeshall Professor of Medicine before he returned to Harvard Medical School in 1977.

During his years as Dean at Harvard, Dr. Tosteson continued his research scholarship, heading a laboratory studying membrane phenomena and authoring scientific publications as late as 2003, many reporting on work done with colleagues, including his wife, Magdalena Tieffenberg Tosteson, Ph.D., an independent investigator in Harvard's Department of Cell Biology.

Dr. Tosteson savored his retreat in East Boothbay, where a modest sailboat was one key to relaxation and refreshment. Another was poetry, symbolized by the portrait of Robert Frost in his office. His son Joshua commented, "He was an avid sailor, and that's where it all connected for him. All the dimensions of life – the science, the

poetry, the nature – it was all encapsulated when he was at the helm of a ship. That is when my dad the full man came out. My enduring image of my father forever will be of him singing *a capella* sea shanties as we sailed along the coast of Maine." His death at 84 years of age followed a lengthy illness against which he refused to buckle. He leaves his wife, Magdalena, daughters Heather, Ingrid, Zoe, and Carrie Marais, sons Joshua and Tor, and a brother, Thomas.

Dan Tosteson's luster as physician, research scholar, teacher, dean, humanist, intellectual, and solidly good human being will remain bright for many decades to come.

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