

Remembering Dorothy Wylie, 1929–2016



David Allen

After a remarkable life and a career of influence, Dorothy Wylie died peacefully on August 13, 2016, at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, ON – from which she had first graduated as a nurse in 1950. To the end of her life, Dorothy was surrounded and well-supported by the steadfast group of friends she had cherished for decades. And to the end, she maintained the intellectual ferocity that had emboldened her leadership journey, drawn bright people to her, and kept her at the pinnacle of leadership. All of that was balanced by her famously dry and playful sense of humour, and the mischievous sparkle in her eyes.

Longwoods published an excellent piece about Dorothy in March 2003 (*Nursing Leadership*, 16(1): 42–46. doi:10.12927/cjnl.2003.16309) on her retirement as editor of the *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership*. Her career was beautifully summarized there, so we won't revisit that part of her story here. Rather, it is important to say some of the things she didn't say about herself.

Dorothy was a humble woman who was vaulted into a nursing superstar role. Her influence on generations of nurses is legendary. She mentored, coached, taught, and befriended many of the most successful nurse leaders in the country – a cadre of women and men who went on to executive roles in healthcare organizations, universities, governments and healthcare associations. And in turn they have influenced another generation behind them.

While Dorothy's many public positions of influence often found her somewhat uncomfortably centre stage, she was most at ease with smaller groups, especially her inner circle of friends or a group of students or young leaders. She gave wise counsel, asked difficult questions, and was pretty intolerant of fussiness or foolishness. She loved great cruise ships, good wine, meals with friends and intelligent conversation. She was thoughtful, kind and honest.

Dorothy was a pioneer and involved in many firsts. But perhaps her most remarkable legacy is the number of nurses who met her even once and came away saying, "Wow – I want to be like her." She was an amazing woman, nurse, leader, teacher and friend, and there are sore hearts all over Canada as we mourn her death together.

Michael Villeneuve
Villeneuve Associates
Mountain, ON