

Diplomat &

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THE LIFE & TIMES
OF WILLIAM BARTON,
DEAN OF DIPLOMATS

'Seek
peace.
Prepare
for war.'



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da's Foreign Minister and her husband."

"Well, we all said, 'no no no.'"

The pope had been hearing all this confusion about who was married to whom, and when the couple, finally properly introduced, were presented to him, he said: "Is there something I can do for the two of you?"

There was another shoe still to fall.

The reception was being broadcast over closed-circuit television, and Mr. Barton phoned his wife, herself something of a joker, to find out if she had been watching.

"Well, she had, and she told him, 'Don't speak to me ... call my lawyer.'"

"It was quite a day."

For most diplomats, the rewards are the knowledge that they are doing important things, and enjoying a certain level of prestige and respect. But few get rich.

For Arthur Menzies, a former ambassador to China and among Mr. Barton's friends for nearly six decades, there is no mystery about Mr. Barton's financial achievements. He was always canny about where he put his money. More important, the Bartons lived a simple life.

"People who achieve, it often goes to their head and they're pleased with themselves and always dress and party for the occasion. Not Bill and Jeanie. They dressed well but never ostentatiously. They were never spenders just for show purposes."

Mr. Barton and Mr. Menzies, six months older, are two of the oldest surviving members of the department. "Once you get past 85 or so, you can only hope to still have one's wits. We've been lucky."

There's no doubting that there's less spring in Mr. Barton's step than there once was.

His sense of balance is more precarious. He has sciatica. His good eye is losing out to macular degeneration. Sometimes there is an annoying ringing in his ears.

"I realize that I'm getting to be an old man," he says.

But he takes each day as it comes.

And there is that final project – using that failing eye to look out for the best investment opportunities, so that the final disbursement to Carleton, when it's made, is the most generous possible.

His niece's words were on target: "You can't top a guy like that."

Charles Enman is an Ottawa writer.

Sharing the wealth

UBC devises a plan to share drug revenue writes **Don Cayo**

There is not much value, and usually even less prospect for future funding, in scientific discoveries that just sit on the shelf. So the savvier universities in Canada have begun to focus ever more on commercialization – on pushing new research to the point where it can lure in a private partner and result in something new to sell.

But what of the old notions of academic idealism? Of the drive to simply make the world a better place?

There is room for that, too, under a new policy adopted late last year by the industry liaison office of the University of British Columbia. It commits UBC to ensuring any future drug discovery from its researchers and its labs will be accessible to all who need it. This follows the lead of a handful of elite schools such as University of California (Berkeley) and Yale, but it blazes a new trail for Canadian institutions. Some, like University of Manitoba, have a similar policy for specific projects – sometimes this is a condition of funding from outside agencies like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – but UBC is the first to adopt it campus-wide.

What will it mean?

The first case where it applies is a contract with a private company to produce a newly developed cheap, benign version of an expensive old drug that's rife with nasty side-effects. For this, all it requires is a simple provision in any contract with a private partner to ensure it will be made available at cost in countries where most people can't afford to pay the usual retail price.

This drug, a replacement for Amphotericin B or "amp-the-terrible" as it is known in the lab, can cure lethal fungal infections. In rich countries like ours, it can extend the life of AIDS or cancer patients, many of whom die of fungal infections before the main disease has a chance to finish them off. In poor countries it could be a godsend to the 200 million people a year who contract leishmaniasis. This fungus, which most rich people have never heard of, kills about 500,000 people a year in India alone.

For other kinds of discoveries, the contract details will be a bit more complex. For example, if a UBC-discovered drug that is already on the market is tweaked as a result

of new research, the policy will apply only to the new component. It will not retroactively affect the existing drug. So a case-by-case deal will have to be struck with any company that makes the newer version.

The ability to make such practical case-by-case accommodations is a key feature of the policy, says Barbara Campbell, who was UBC's associate director of industry liaison when the policy was adopted. Indeed, she said, flexibility was pretty well the only concern that came up when the drug companies that UBC deals with were asked to comment on a draft policy last summer. They wanted such things as an option to produce low-cost drugs for poor countries themselves, rather than to automatically license other companies, she said, and UBC agreed they had a point. No doubt many poor countries would love to get the jobs that would result if low-cost versions of the drugs can be made locally. But the drug companies have a point in wanting to retain control. For one thing, they will better able to ensure consistent quality. They may be able to finesse some tax benefits at home, as well.

And, as I found out three years ago when I wrote about an immensely successful program to eradicate river blindness from West Africa, altruism can win an often-maligned drug company some major points when it comes to both public relations and staff morale. Merck, the company that holds the patent to the only effective preventative and treatment for this once-widespread disease, has pledged to donate as much as is needed for as long as it is needed to wipe out the disease. Not only has it, not surprisingly, received some positive publicity for this oft-repeated commitment, it has also found it to be an unexpectedly effective recruitment tool. Simply put, researchers like to work for a company they believe is doing good.

UBC may gain a similar recruitment advantage for being first to the plate with its new policy. I hope it does. But I wouldn't count on it lasting too long. Any edge it gets is likely to be eroded when other universities sign on to similar policies. I expect there will be lots of them. I hope it will be soon.

Don Cayo is a Vancouver writer.