

Margaret Billingham, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.Path

Margaret Billingham, Professor of Pathology, emerita, and Director of Cardiac Pathology at Stanford University, in Stanford, California died on July 14, 2009 after a brief struggle with cancer. She was a founding member of our Society and its president in 1993. She was awarded the Society of Cardiovascular Pathology Distinguished Achievement Award in 1991. This was but one of many honors that she received for her contributions and achievements in cardiovascular and pulmonary pathology.

Margaret began her medical career with the completion of her M.B., M.S. (M.D. equivalent) degree at the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine in London, U.K. in 1954. She undertook postgraduate training in internal medicine and cardiopulmonary medicine in the U.K. before leaving for America with John and her young family. She arrived at Stanford in 1966 as a postdoctoral fellow in cardiology. In 1968 she began her training in anatomical pathology followed by a fellowship in surgical pathology and a series of clinical and research fellowships in pathology and cardiology. She was appointed Assistant Professor of Pathology at Stanford in 1975 and quickly ascended the academic ranks and was promoted to the rank of Professor of Pathology in 1988. She retired in 1994.

Margaret's innumerable contributions to the fields of cardiovascular pathology and cardiovascular medicine are reflected, in part, by the more than 500 published scientific papers, abstracts, and book chapters. The depth and breadth of her work in cardiac transplant pathology, myocarditis, adriamycin cardiotoxicity and cardiomyopathy are well known to the members of the Society. More important is the impact that her teaching and friendship had on the scores of residents, fellows, graduate students and visitors who spent time with her reviewing cases across the microscope or looking at study sets from the small "black boxes" that she meticulously maintained with the different grades and mimics of acute rejection, the types of myocarditis, patterns of primary and secondary cardiomyopathy, and cardiac tumors. Her lectures reflected the precision with which she approached challenging cases. Brilliantly illustrated and carefully crafted, the complexities of distinguishing acute rejection from Quilty effect seem to evaporate. She was awarded numerous teaching awards at Stanford for medical student and postgraduate education.

Margaret was a dear and devoted friend to many members of this Society. She was a role model for young men and women in academic medicine. Moreover, she was a mentor to many of us at Stanford and around the world. She provided guidance and advice with a touching and gentle hand. She was truly gracious and took extraordinary pride in the successes, however small, of those around her. By devotion to her family she emphasized the importance of family life in a balanced career. Most conversations were consumed in large part by the achievements of her children and grandchildren and genuine concern for your family and friends.

Margaret will be deeply missed by all of us. We are truly saddened by her death and our deepest sympathies go out to John and her sons, Graham and Bob, and her grandchildren. As John so poignantly wrote: “ In her own quiet way, she always told people about how much she appreciated their contribution to her life. She was a remarkable woman filled with grace and humility, who left this world a better place and touched the lives of so many. It was a life full of strong family ties, joy and happiness, excitement and achievement, a distinguished professional career in the world of medicine.”

A celebration of Margaret’s life and achievements is currently being planned for later in the year at Stanford. John Billingham’s address is available through John Veinot,

