

BOSTON IRISH REPORTER

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Commentary

MGH's Dr. Tom Durant Left an Extraordinary Legacy

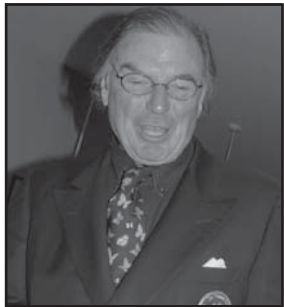
By JOE LEARY

In death, Dorchester's Dr. Tom Durant is achieving nearly as much as he did alive.

Now 2 1/2 years since his funeral, hundreds, if not thousands who experienced his friendship are building a foundation to perpetuate Dr. Durant's work in refugee camps and poor communities throughout the world.

Dr. Thomas S. Durant spent 33 years at the Massachusetts General Hospital as Assistant Director. Though his training and basic expertise was as an Obstetrician and Gynecologist, Tom's interests also carried him to over 25 refugee camps throughout the world, many of them he visited several times. There is no doubt - this was a special man.

It's obvious that those who knew him want to remain close and continue their identity with him. This was a man filled with love and good cheer. Tom cared about everyone and those lucky enough to know him were better for it. He made life happier for all those he touched, his family, his friends and especially the hopeless men, women and children living in hunger and squalor in the many refugee camps he visited during his life.



Bill Reilly

As of April 2004, the Thomas S. Durant Fellowship for Refugee Medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital has received over \$400,000 in contributions from Tom's friends. The Fellowship is well on its way to achieve the four-year target of \$1.5 million.

Tom would have been amazed and humbled.

During the summer of 2001, as death was approaching, he forbade his friends to honor him in any way. "No Dinners!" he would exclaim as he pounded the table.

Now under the energetic leadership of Dr. Larry Ronan at the MGH, the work of the Fellowship has already begun. In fact, the first Fellowship recipient, Dr. Kris Olson of the MGH has completed his fellowship year. After special training in London, Dr. Olson spent 6 months in refugee camps on the Burmese-Thailand border assisting victims, training local medical personnel and helping to build infrastructure.

You can say that for those 6 months Tom Durant was right by the side of Kris as he extended much needed aid and advice to the desperate people in the camps who find themselves without homes, income or support.



Stacey Lewis with Joe Leary

Participation in the Durant Fellowship Fund



Everyone is invited to participate in both the golf tournament and in supporting the marathon. Checks should be made out to -MGH Durant Fellowship and sent to Danica Mari c/o Massachusetts General Hospital.

Team Durant, 55 Fruit street, Bartlett 917, Boston MA 02114. Please call Danica for information concerning the Durant Golf Tournament at Oyster Harbors (617 724 3874) or Email her at dmari@partners.org. Whether your gift is \$50, \$500 or \$50,000 the funds may be the most productive you have ever donated.

At left, Dr. Larry Ronan and Mrs Fredericka Durant.

The Durant spirit and courage lives today through the contributions and resolve that his friends provide the Fellowship at the MGH.

Two more Fellowship recipients have been selected to be trained and travel to refugee camps during 2004. Both MGH nurses, Ms. Grace M. Deveney, RN and Ms Katherine T. Fallon, RN will begin their training shortly.

A fourth "Fellow" will be appointed in 2005. In some ways that will be four new "Tom Durants" doing his work of caring and kindness.

Dr. Ronan says, "We are committed to sending out each year an MGH person to serve in the disadvantaged communities world wide with an emphasis on refugees and hunger."

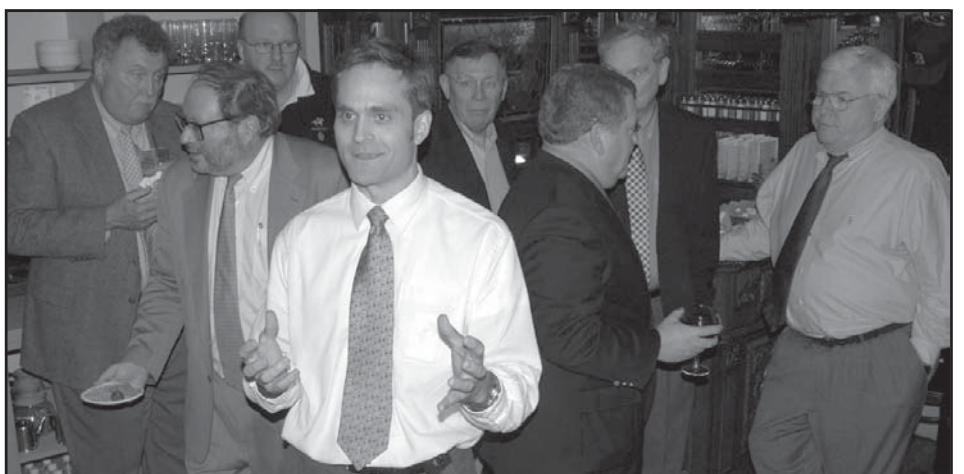
Not only has Dr. Ronan taken on the overall responsibility to manage the Fellowship, he is also its chief fundraiser. Along with Dr. Steve Durant (Tom's son), Larry and 30 additional Team Durant runners will be attempting to overcome the 26 miles, the Newton hills and the painful body aches to run this year's famous Boston Marathon. Last year the Team raised over \$50,000 in support of the Fellowship. This year with any luck, they will beat that mark.

Mr. Bill Reilly, another close friend of Tom Durant is also a leading Fellowship contributor and fundraiser. Bill conducts the annual Tom Durant Golf Tournament at Oyster Harbors Golf Club each year. The tournament will be held this year on Cape Cod on June 21st. Bill's generous efforts have contributed nearly \$100,000 to the Fellowship.

Both of these men were amongst Tom's closest friends. They are neither overly sentimental nor fools. They honor Tom's memory not only out of past



Tom O'Donnell, Joe Leary, Fredericka Durant, and Dr. Kris Olson



Dr. Kris Olson spoke about his work in refugee camps on the Burma-Thailand border during a meeting March 25 at Bakey's Restaurant in Boston.

friendship but because they believe in the values that drove Tom to spend much of his life improving the desperate lives of the unfortunate, the have nots, and the victims of terror.

These values and this dedication can be understood and embraced by most Americans and most Bostonians - and all are welcome to the Durant Fellowship and its ambitious goals.

Can refugee camps be wiped out? Can the millions of hungry be fed? Can world disease be eradicated? The answer is probably no.

But can 100 or 1000 or 5000 be fed and treated - yes - and that is what the MGH Durant Fellowship and Bill and Larry are accomplishing

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