

# Planting Seeds

## ► Reflections on the founding of the HSC Foundation

In 1976, a Gardner planted a seed. Today, another Gardner helps to tend a flourishing crop of generosity, progress, and community spirit.

The late William Cooper Gardner, Q.C., was the Founding Chair of what was originally known as the Health Sciences Centre Research Foundation. It was perhaps the crowning achievement of a life dedicated to serving others.

“My dad had been the Chair of the hospital’s Board of Directors,” says William Sparling Gardner, the founder’s proud son and the current Vice-Chair of the Foundation. “From that seat, he saw that there was a need to complement what government was doing. The government takes care of the day-to-day expenses of running the hospital, but my dad and others saw a major gap in funding for research. They realized that to move health care forward there had to be other sources of funding.”

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William Cooper Gardner’s interest in health care was also inspired by the career of his own father (William Arthur Gardner), an orthopaedic surgeon at the Winnipeg General Hospital, one of the founding institutions of HSC Winnipeg. But perhaps more than that, he was driven by a desire to serve his country, his community, and his family.

**During World War II, at the age of 18, his Armed Merchant Cruiser was torpedoed and sunk in the Denmark Strait.** He survived enemy fire and frigid waters while clinging on to pieces of wreckage. He also landed on Juno Beach on D-Day. With his ship grounded at low tide, he avoided certain death as the Focke-Wulf 190 fighters that flew overhead had spent their ammunition.

“These were our bedtime stories, but it was difficult to fall asleep after hearing them,” says Gardner, a lawyer at Pitblado. “My dad was proud of his service to Canada.”

When he returned from overseas, William Cooper Gardner earned his law degree, got married to Laura, became a father, and got active in Rotary, at the hospital, and at the Foundation. “He wanted to get involved, he wanted to do his part, he wanted to make a difference,” says a proud son. William Cooper Gardner passed away in 2003.

## WILLIAM C. GARDNER BOARDROOM



William S. Gardner, Vice-Chair of the HSC Foundation Board, salutes a portrait of his father:

“He wanted to get involved, he wanted to do his part, he wanted to make a difference.”

Gardner sees his current Board involvement as a tribute to his dad and his grandfather. “I am proud to carry the family legacy forward,” says Gardner. “And I am proud that my daughter, Dr. Rachael Elizabeth Gardner, is now working as a paediatrician on the HSC campus.”

Gardner believes that **his father would be “immensely satisfied” by the Foundation’s position today** and by the hospital’s progress.

“He would be pleased by developments in research, but also by the hospital’s physical development over time,” says Gardner. “He was instrumental in acquiring the land which comprises the campus as we know it today and he would be impressed by what has happened since. He used to say that all things were possible for men of good will.”

And as four generations of Gardners have proven – men and women alike – they are people of exceptional good will. ❖