

## Tribute to Syd Jackson– A Real Arthritis Champion

By Denis Morrice, executive director of the Ontario Rheumatology Association;  
and Carter Thorne, MD, FRCPC, FACP

Syd Jackson was a huge supporter of arthritis research and was involved with The Arthritis Society for 25 years as a board member and chair of numerous committees and ad hoc projects. He died recently at the age of 93. Syd's wife, Nancy, died a number of years ago from the complications of rheumatoid arthritis.

Syd was always concerned about the inadequate funding for arthritis research. He had an incredible skill at dissecting numbers, especially budgets, research allocations, and demographics – all coming from his experience in teaching actuarial science and being the youngest President of Manulife, which during his time grew from \$2.3 billion to \$16.5 billion in assets.

He was a great supporter of the Rheumatic Disease Unit concept and The Arthritis Society's support of clinical and research fellows. He often noted that there would be a shortage of rheumatologists due to the aging population, thus his support for the funding of clinical fellows. Though based in Toronto, his vision was national, and he ensured that these two important programs were accessible to all Canadian medical schools.

Syd had a good handle on research funding and served as a director of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR). He also understood politics and the importance of stakeholder collaboration. He gave The Arthritis Society Board support for Arthritis 2000 – bringing 250 stakeholders together to map out initiatives for arthritis research and patient care. When the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) opportunity presented itself, Syd made many calls to Members of Parliament and we proceeded to meet with various cabinet members, ensuring that patients and researchers were always included. It was a huge effort that included others, especially Dr. Tony Cruz and his research colleagues, along with Jim Davies and Ann Qualman, representing the Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance (CAPA). The result:



1922 - 2016

CAN (Canadian Arthritis Network) was the first disease-specific NCE in Canada, and resulted in 14 years of multi-million dollars of arthritis research funding.

Next came the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR). Syd always found it disconcerting that there wasn't even an arthritis panel at the Medical Research Council (MRC), now known as the CIHR. When he heard that MRC was considering an organizational change, Syd immediately orchestrated a meeting with the President, Dr. Henry Friesen, and we spent time strategizing how we

could improve the arthritis research agenda. Syd noted that we needed a broader research power base. In discussions with the late Dr. Cy Frank, we brought together researchers from rheumatology, orthopedics, dermatology and dentistry to create a collaborative and wider based research group. Then came a replay of meetings with cabinet ministers in Ottawa. The result: the CIHR Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (IMHA), meaning greater opportunities for arthritis researchers.

Syd is remembered by some as a leader, others as a facilitator, and by all as a friend and mentor with an infectious smile and twinkle in his eye that usually meant he had an idea or strategy that would further the "cause."

Things don't just happen – people make them happen...Syd made things happen.

*Denis Morrice*  
Executive Director, Ontario Rheumatology Association  
Former CEO, The Arthritis Society  
Toronto, Ontario

*Carter Thorne, MD, FRCPC, FACP*  
Medical Director, The Arthritis Program & Chief Division of Rheumatology,  
Southlake Regional Health Centre  
Newmarket, Ontario