

REFLECTIONS ON A JOURNEY, DOING UNFINISHED BUSINESS, AND HOMAGE TO BALFOUR MOUNT

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As a medical student at McGill in 1972, I was honored to meet Dr. Balfour Mount. He made it possible for me to accompany him to St. Christopher's Hospice. We were 8 students from all over the world. Dr. Cicely Saunders felt the best way to learn to be with dying patients was to work as a nurse. So, in that summer of my third year of medical school, I did.

My career has gone on, first at Mc Gill and since 1987 at UC San Diego. I have been privileged to teach generations of students and faculty a humanistic empowering model of healthcare, seeing the patient as teacher. Our role is to create environments where people take charge of their lives and achieve wellbeing. My first teacher in doing unfinished business was my father. I was 17. He was 72. He had a MI, called me and my mother into the CCU and said, "The last 25 years with you and Ellen have been the best years of my life. If I should die, I want to say thank you and goodbye." Then he lived for 20 years and we got to know each other. Present at these moments in people's lives, we can facilitate unfinished business, whether a mother with cancer, who wrote letters for the next 20 years of her daughter's life, knowing she wouldn't be there, a Somali family saying goodbye in the ICU to a loved one or my Dad, opening doors to the future. ■