The fragility of human life sometimes is most evident in sudden and unexpected deaths. Such was the case of our friend and colleague, Allan Yates, who died on August 3, 2010, while traveling with his wife, Charlotte, on an ocean cruise in the High Arctic. Although Allan became an Emeritus Professor in October 2007, he continued to be professionally active in medical education relating to The Ohio State University Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program (IBGP), of which he was the founder and director.

Allan was born in Calgary in the province of Alberta, Canada. He received his premedical education at the University of Alberta in Calgary, and his medical degree from the same institution, but at the Edmonton campus. Of special importance was a psychiatric externship at Warren State Hospital in Pennsylvania, where he met his future wife, Charlotte. He then went on to the University of Toronto to pursue a PhD in neurochemistry at the Institute of Medical Science and did 6 months of residency in neurosurgery before receiving his degree. He then went on to McGill University in Montreal for a 1-year residency in anatomic pathology, and then returned to Toronto to complete his training in neuropathology. In 1975, he joined the Department of Pathology, Division of Neuropathology, at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, and advanced to director of the division in 1982 and professor in 1984. Allan was widely recognized for his diagnostic skills as a neuropathologist and his research accomplishments in the area of gangliosides, as they related to brain tumors. He had a lifetime total of approximately 175 publications and more than 3500 citations. His most highly cited papers related to improving the diagnostic accuracy and interobserver concordance in the classification and grading of primary gliomas (1), the lipid composition of neural tumors (2), and the regulation of lymphocyte responses by human gangliosides (3). Together with the late Dr. Lloyd Horrocks, he was the cofounder of the journal Molecular and Chemical Neuropathology and co-chief editor for 17 years. Allan was an enthusiastic member of numerous scholarly societies, including the American Association of Neuropathologists, the American and International Societies for Neurochemistry, the International Society for Neuropathology, and the Society for Neuro-Oncology. He served as a member of the editorial boards of the Journal of Neuropathology and Experimental Neurology and the Journal of Neuroscience Research.

He had numerous grants from the National Institutes of Health, but perhaps the one that meant the most to him was the first NIH Training Grant to The Ohio State University College of Medicine, for funding of the IBGP. He was the founder and director of this program and the Medical Scientist Program, as well as associate dean for Graduate Student Education in The Ohio State University College of Medicine. Allan’s vision of biomedical education centered on the biology of human disease, and the program that he developed at Ohio State has become a model for many other such programs across the United States. He was a member of the national Graduate Research Education and Training group and served as its Chair from 2007 to 2008. Allan inspired the IBGP graduate students to become the best possible scientists to make the world a healthier place. He personally was the major professor and dissertation advisor of 15 PhD students from 1981 to 2008. Among his honors, he was a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, a fellow of the American College of Pathologists, and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Allan and his wife Charlotte were both avid travelers both before and after his retirement. During the past 3 years, they ventured far and wide, literally from pole to pole and east to west. Special among the Yates’ travels since retirement were two 2-month-long pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, trips to Antarctica, the Caribbean, and the High Arctic. Besides being a world traveler, Allan had many other interests outside of medicine. He was a connoisseur of single malt Scotch whiskeys and sherries. Ever mindful of his Scottish heritage, those of us who attended his annual Robert Burns
dinners, prepared by his devoted wife, Charlotte, will never forget those joyful gatherings. True to his Canadian roots, he was an avid ice hockey player even in the summertime at local indoor hockey rinks. He and Charlotte became highly experienced SCUBA divers, and Allan developed a special interest in undersea wreck diving, including a memorable one in the Scapa Flow off the Orkney Islands. Sadly, it was on his last and final dive that he disappeared without a trace in the Kaiser Franz Joseph Fjord in East Greenland.

Allan was the devoted father of 2 sons, Robert, who is currently in his third year of a surgical residency at Vanderbilt University, and Brian, who is an environmental engineer at Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus. Allan will be missed most by his immediate family but also by his numerous friends and colleagues at The Ohio State University and in Columbus, and the national and international community of physicians and scientists with whom he interacted for more than 35 years.

REFERENCES