



Sexual medicine pioneer “dazed” by honour

Dr. George Szasz was “dazed” when he opened the package he received by courier while visiting his physician son in Hawaii and learned that he had been named a member of the Order of Canada. Szasz, 69, came to Canada from Hungary 51 years ago and is clearly touched by the honour. “Every day I say a blessing that I’m in this country,” he says.

Szasz, who is considered a pioneer in the study of sexual medicine, developed the only curriculum on the subject in Canada at the University of British Columbia. He spent 25 years at Vancouver’s spinal cord unit and the G. F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre, helping paralysed patients become parents.

Szasz had always planned to enter medicine, but when he arrived in Vancouver in 1947 there was no medical school in BC. With minimal knowledge of English, he headed to McGill University for 3 years. He lived with 8 young Jamaican men,

and jokes that the English he spoke then had a Jamaican accent. He then returned to Vancouver to attend the new medical school at UBC, graduating in 1955. Szasz then spent 10 years in family practice, and reflects that this was “the best time for a general practitioner.”

In the early 1960s he was asked to help create interdisciplinary health professional programs at UBC, where the schools of dentistry, rehabilitation medicine and social work were in their infancy. In the late 1960s, “unmet demand” from students led him to organize a course on human sexuality; the 150 students who attended the first session soon grew to 800 students.

In 1975 he established the sexual medicine clinic at the new spinal cord unit. He had only seen a single patient with an injured spinal cord before and had “some of my most shattering experiences” at the unit. The clinic expanded rapidly and Szasz



Szasz: helping paralysed patients become parents

brought in nurses and social workers, training them as “we were training ourselves.” After years of experimenting with fertility techniques, the first baby born to a spinal cord patient at the unit arrived in 1980. About 40 more babies were born before Szasz retired in 1995. — © *Heather Kent*

Donations sought to honour Dr. Gustave Gingras

The Dalhousie University School of Occupational Therapy is seeking donations to establish an annual award commemorating the work of Dr. Gustave Gingras, a CMA past president who died in May 1996. The school hopes to award \$1000 annually to a master of science student studying occu-

pational therapy at Dalhousie. The money would enable the recipient to conduct thesis research on an international topic. A native of Montreal, Gingras was a pioneer in occupational therapy and physical rehabilitation. He worked around the world and helped found the original Reha-

bilitation Institute of Montreal in 1949. To establish an award in his name, the school must raise at least \$20 000. Cheques payable to Dalhousie University, specifying the Dr. Gustave Gingras Award, can be sent to the School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University, Halifax NS B3H 3J5.