

Ronald Doyne Seneviratne MD (London)

My father, Ronald Doyne Seneviratne, passed away as peacefully as he lived on 2 October 2001. His brilliant achievements in the field of medicine are well worthy of record.

Doyne began schooling in 1918 at St. Thomas' College Mount Lavinia. Doyne's academic brilliance unfolded at St. Thomas' where he was awarded the Gregory Scholarship. He passed the Junior Cambridge with honours in 1921, the Cambridge Senior also with honours in 1922, gaining exemption from the London Matriculation. He ended his school career winning the coveted Victoria Gold Medal for the best all-round student in 1924.

Having entered the University College in 1924, Doyne gained admission to the Medical College, Colombo, a year later. He had an exceptional record of achievements in these institutions as well. He was placed first in the first class in the pre-medical, and first in first class in every professional examination at the Medical College, winning an impressive array of gold medals, prizes and scholarship.

He won the Pre-medical Medal, Lucy de Abrew Gold Medal for Biology, Chalmers Gold Medal for Anatomy, Mathew Gold Medal for Medical Jurisprudence, Vanderstraaten Prize for Hygiene, Garvin Gold Medal for Operative Surgery, Rutherford Gold Medal for Tropical Medicine as well as the Post-Licenciate Scholarship.

The first professional fee he earned was from a relative who died of cancer. He recalled in a book titled "Memories of Matara" where he spent his childhood:

"She summoned me professionally as soon as I passed my final exam and asked me for my opinion. Not much examination was necessary to see that the cancer had spread widely. There was no hope of any cure. She paid me a gold sovereign, my first professional fee. Up to a few months before her death, she tried to keep up the life-style she had been accustomed to as a child. She rarely went out, but on such special occasions as Christmas morning service, she would bedeck herself in diamonds and pearls. She would then drive to church in her phaeton, drawn by a pair of white horses, and driven by a uniformed Muthu and his assistant."

The fee he was paid is indeed a princely sum even in today's context.



Doyne proceeded to London where he underwent training in research under G R Cameron, Professor of Morbid Anatomy of the UCH Medical School, London. He was awarded a doctorate (MD London) for his research on the liver and elected a member of the Pathological Society of Great Britain and Ireland in recognition of his exceptional research work published on 15 occasions in scientific literature in England, the USA, Germany and Scandinavia.

Doyne ended his working career having served as Pathologist of the General Hospital, Colombo, Director of the Medical Research Institute, and Deputy Director of Health. He was a lecturer and examiner of the Medical College of the University of Ceylon.

His pupils, as well as others in the profession who know of his contributions to medicine, held him in high esteem for his achievements, accomplished with simplicity.

Despite Doyne's impressive qualifications and achievements, he remained a very modest and unassuming man. He passed away peacefully in his home in Cambridge Place, Colombo at the age of 95 years. His goodness, gentleness and loving kindness to his fellow men will always be in the minds of those who knew him.

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