

# Legacy of Western's Roth lives on through research

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A renowned physician. An inquisitive scientist. A tough athlete. And a proud Western alumnus. Jim Roth summed up everything it meant to be "purple and proud."

And now, in honour of his legacy, Western has established the James Roth Research Chair in Musculoskeletal Measurement and Knowledge Translation. The university has matched the \$1.5 million committed to the chair, for a total of \$3 million.

The chair will be celebrated Monday.

Prior to his death in 2013, Roth worked tirelessly to expand his standing as an international leader in upper extremity research and clinical innovation at Western.

Along with Dr. Robert McFarlane at St. Joseph's Health Care (SJHC), Roth co-founded the Hand and Upper Limb Centre (HULC) in 1992 and served as its medical director since its inception. The centre has grown to be the largest of its kind in Canada with an international reputation for its research and teaching excellence.

Surgery professor Graham King of the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry said Roth was as strong a doctor as he was a friend.

"Summing up Jim Roth? Wow, that's a toughie," said King, who played a major role in creating this new chair. "For Western, he certainly is 'true purple' in every respect. Even though he was not from London, he played football here and one of the biggest Western supporters you could find. He had a long-standing interest in always doing what's right and was a great ambassador for the university."

More than 110 donors contributed to the chair, which will be based in Health Sciences, although the position is cross-appointed with Schulich.

"Jim and I had many discussions about advancing research and building greater synergy between the Hand and Upper Limb Clinic and the Faculty of Health Sciences," said Jim Weese, Health Sciences dean. "I am delighted that we have this research chair named in his honour. He was a great leader, a brilliant surgeon and a strong academic."

"His legacy lives on in what he has built, and also through the work of this chair, which aligns perfectly with the recent announcement that the next Cluster of Research Excellence is in the Musculoskeletal Health area."

Western has set its sights on becoming a

world-class leader in research with a goal of creating 100 new endowed chairs by 2020. This is the eighth chair created under the program and the fifth involving Schulich.

Roth came to Western as an undergraduate student in Chemistry in the early 1970s. After only two years, he was accepted to medical school, all while playing varsity rugby and football. He excelled during medical school receiving the Lange Award as a graduating Western medical student with one of the highest scores in his class.

After completing an internship in British Columbia, he returned to Western, encouraged by Dr. Jack Kennedy to join the Orthopaedic Residency training program. While in residency, he did pioneering research on a synthetic ligament for the knee. The Ligament Augmentation Device was subsequently marketed by 3M.

Under Roth's leadership, HULC scientists developed several new techniques for computer-assisted surgery and surgical innovation, leading to advances in surgical mechatronics, joint design, wound-healing and limb re-implantation.

The Roth Chair will focus on surgery and rehabilitation of hand and upper-limb disorders, including the creation of a facility for the development of musculoskeletal di-

agnostic tools, bringing them from innovation to practice.

King, who established the Bioengineering Laboratory at HULC, added the new position would create an environment of bi-directional translational research, where ideas flow from bedside to bench and back again.

"The chair will continue his legacy and will live on through advancing musculoskeletal knowledge at Western," King said. "He was a big believer in donating and supporting the university. This chair epitomized what he thought of Western and the concept of giving and contributing to knowledge. It fits with what he was thinking and where he wanted to go."

A strong personality when it came to sports and his research, Roth was an even greater man when it came to his wife, children and grandchildren, King added.

Roth's wife, Barb, said he was a private person in many ways and that seeing his research being carried on by others would have made him very happy.

"The James Roth Research Chair is a great honour to Jim's legacy," she said. "Clinical research was a passion of his and a critical part of his success as a surgeon. The girls and I are so proud of him and we are pleased this research will continue."