

Steinberg named McGill chancellor

BY PEGGY CURRAN, GAZETTE UNIVERSITIES REPORTER MAY 14, 2009 10:16 AM



Arnold Steinberg was named the 18th chancellor of McGill University on Thursday.

Photograph by: Pierre Obendrauf, The Gazette

It's been fifty-five years since Arnold Steinberg arrived at McGill University as a freshman and marvelled at the names of famous men etched in marble in the atrium of Moyses Hall.

Since then, the Montreal businessman has been an evening lecturer in marketing, a member of the board of governors and chairman of the founding board of the McGill University Health Centre.

In July, Steinberg will join the ranks of the luminaries he admired so much, taking up a three-year mandate as the 18th chancellor since the university was founded in 1821.

"I was blown away," said Steinberg, who has spent the better part of 40 years on boards and committees associated with his alma mater. "It's an incredible honour to be elected chancellor." The titular head of the university, the chancellor's job is to represent the university at convocation and other formal events.

"You are being honoured on the one hand, but also seen as both fit and knowledgeable to be the face of the university."

Steinberg, who celebrated his 76th birthday Tuesday, is a 1954 McGill commerce grad who earned a Master's of Business Administration from Harvard in 1957. When he takes over July 1, Steinberg will take over from Richard Pound, Olympic medallist in rowing and a fierce champion of drug-free competition.

Pound raised some hackles after an interview last summer where he described Canada as “un pays de sauvages” 400 years ago.

Pound, who was responding to criticism of the International Olympic Committee's decision to allow China to host the games despite human rights' violations, blamed the controversy on bad translation and refused to step down from McGill or the IOC. "I can be inept, clumsy or wrong, but I am not a racist, I never have been, I never will be," Pound said at the time.

This week, McGill said there was no connection between the flap and Pound's departure after completing two five-year terms.

Steinberg, the nephew of Sam Steinberg, was chief financial officer of the family food chain. Later the chair of Ivanhoe Inc., he is currently a senior officer of Cleman Ludmer Steinberg Inc., an investment holding company. A philanthropist who received an honorary doctorate from McGill in 2000 and the Order of Canada in 1993, he is vice-chair of the Canadian Institutes for Health Research's Governing Council.

His long affiliation with the Montreal Children's Hospital dates back to his days with the family supermarket chain and he cooperated with Dr. Charles Scriver, who was evaluating the role of Vitamin D in reducing the risk of the bone disorder rickets in children. Steinberg, who refused to supply milk that did not contain Vitamin D, went on to become co-chair of the hospital's capital campaign and founding president of the National Food Distribution Centre for the Treatment of Metabolic Diseases.

“Arnold is a force of uncommon integrity and grace,” said Robert Rabinovitch, chair of McGill's board of governors. “He has been a constant ambassador for the University, an inspiration to us all, as well as a great friend to McGill. His contributions to the wider community have been immense and it is with great pride that we name him to this prestigious position.

“At the same time, I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the magnificent contributions Richard W. Pound has made as Chancellor of McGill, as he comes to the end of his second term. Dick has devoted himself tirelessly to McGill over many, many years and we thank him profusely for all he has done.”

Steinberg, who has three children, is married to Blema Steinberg, a psychoanalyst and emeritus professor of political science at McGill.

pcurran@thegazette.canwest.com

© Copyright (c) The Montreal Gazette