

## GEORGE FREDERICK CURTIS, F.O.C., O.B.C., Q.C.: A CELEBRATION

*By Joan Curtis Duchastel, James MacIntyre, Q.C., and David Harris, Q.C.\**



George Curtis was born in Stogumber, Somerset, on September 4, 1906. He died on October 23, 2005, in Vancouver, B.C., at home, 1808 Allison Road, in his 100th year. He will long be remembered and missed by family and by countless friends at home and abroad. He is described in the tributes below as father, as lawyer and teacher, and as neighbour.

### GEORGE CURTIS: OUR DAD

The Curtis family was a typical post-war family, with a stay-at-home mother, several children and a willingness to travel so that Dad could get the best position. Both my brother John (1941) and I (1944) were born in Halifax, while my brothers Robert (1949) and Peter (1950) were born on the other side of the country in Vancouver.

We had few relatives. Dad had no brothers or sisters, and our closest links on his side of the family were with the offspring of my grandfather's brother in Exeter, William F. Curtis, and his daughters, Anne and Judy, both of whom still live in England. Anne's daughter Helen Trathan lived with Dad for a few years when she moved to Canada in the early 1990s, and she visited Dad regularly, along with her growing family, from her home in Victoria.

Our mother, Doris, and her sister, Olive, lost their father, Judge J.W. Margeison, to tuberculosis early in life. Olive never married. After the death of her mother, Mary Gertrude, in Halifax in 1964, Aunt Olive moved to Vancouver and became an important part of the Curtis family. Dad always claimed that Olive, despite her physical handicap (childhood polio had limited her ability to walk), was his match anytime with her prodigious recall of facts, her opinions on everything and her lively sense of humour!

When we moved west, our nanny, Etta, came with us, and she looked after the growing family until she had her own.

### 1808 Allison Road

The Curtis house at 1808 Allison has been home to several generations of the Curtis family, countless visitors and many basement boarders, several of whom became part of Dad's valuable support network in his later years.

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\* This collaborative tribute was penned, as to family matters, by Ms. Duchastel; as to lawyerly/academic matters, by Prof. MacIntyre; and as to lawyerly/neighbourly matters, by Mr. Harris. Helpful coordinating input was provided by Prof. Elizabeth Edinger—Ed.

Dad bought the house in 1945 with two or three thousand dollars that Mom had managed to save. They had no curtains or rugs for the first couple of years because they did not have the money to pay for them. Dad's reason for buying the house was twofold: he wanted to be close to his work (he still walked to his law school office into his 100th year) and, with a growing university nearby, he knew that the bus service to downtown would always be excellent. In addition, the setting in the University Endowment Lands on the west side of Vancouver was idyllic.

The home also had a role in history: it served as inspiration for Dad's suggestion of the name "Simon Fraser University"—1808 was the year the famous explorer arrived in the homeland of the Musqueam First Nation at the mouth of the Fraser River.

### **The Neighbourhood**

When it was built, 1808 was one of the earliest houses on the street. Throughout the 1940s and '50s other families, mainly academic or business people, built houses, schools and places of worship in the area. Dad steered the committee that oversaw the building of St. Anselm's Anglican Church in 1953. It was a time of strong family values and safe communities, where children skipped from house to house or played in the nearby forest, beach and golf course areas without parental supervision or worry. It was a generation where most mothers did not work and, if your mom was not home, you simply went next door to the neighbour's house.



*The Curtis family in 1950 at 1808 Allison Road. Back row (l. to r.): Doris, John and George. Front row (l. to r.): Peter, Joan and Robert.*

Dad and Mom entertained all the time. Many dignitaries and countless others were received at 1808. Tea parties included silver service and cucumber sandwiches (without crusts), and ladies attended wearing—from a child's point of view—extraordinary hats and outfits. Gentlemen were included in cocktail parties and there Dad served mixed drinks out of a variety of lead crystal flasks while hired women in little white aprons offered the hors d'oeuvres to the guests. In addition to the local book club and frequent bridge parties, there were occasional gourmet dinners in neighbours' homes (which continued into the '80s); Dad was always mystified by the array of unfamiliar ingredients Mom commissioned him to buy when their turn came around. When not entertaining, the parents were out most evenings at one function or another. At the time, our favourite babysitter was Jim MacIntyre, who delighted us with his musical skills and always let us stay up past our regular bedtime.

One of my distinct memories is of Dad, Dr. Norman A.M. Mackenzie and other Nova Scotians standing in our carport, opening a variety of oysters and arguing all the while over the relative merits of their particular offerings. Many months in advance of the party, the contributing guests ordered crates from their preferred Nova Scotia bay or creek and shipped them west by train. The crates would arrive full of cornmeal, oysters and woodchips. We children found the whole thing outlandishly gross but amusing.

Despite his professional responsibilities, Dad was very much present in our lives. He always prepared oatmeal, boiled eggs and bacon for breakfast, a habit from his English origins and Prairie upbringing. Every Curtis today can still prepare a perfect three-minute egg! In good weather or bad, he took the kids to Mount Seymour for a day of tobogganing and skiing.

He often ate lunch at home and played a little ball with the children. Our backyard was a magnet for neighbourhood children, as Dad had bought an enormous teeter-totter that spun around, and we had a large goldfish pond that doubled as a wading pool. We had a swing hanging from a laburnum tree and at least one underground fort featuring several rooms. In addition, our numerous fruit trees offered treats for all. After lunch and a short play period, Dad would often cat-nap in the living room for 10 minutes before returning to his office on foot.

### **The Camping Curtises**

When holiday time came around, we went camping. In the 1950s and '60s, camping was so rare that the *Reader's Digest* published an article on our family adventures under the title "The Camping Curtises". Equipped with a canvas tent, army surplus cots and sleeping bags that Dad found on sale, we'd take off in our V-8 station wagon, usually for three weeks and always with Dad at the wheel. At that time, it took us a full day to reach Hope. Driving the Fraser Canyon was high adventure, with an extremely narrow road, rockslides aplenty, remote service stations and faulty tires and cars (we always carried a water pouch on the front fender to feed the car radiator and any thirsty passengers). We camped anywhere, but Dad's golden rule was flat, dry ground for the tent and running water close by—whether stream, river or farmer's watering pump. Campgrounds were a rare luxury.

We travelled all over British Columbia, initially with the Oxleys in the Okanagan and Kootenays, and later to Dawson Creek on the just-completed John Hart Highway, where we lost our oilpan. Manning Park was a favourite destination. Our longer trips were to Yellowstone Park, to see "Old Faithful," and to the Grand Canyon. Our last long-distance camping trip as a family was to the Canadian Bar Association Convention in Winnipeg in 1960, with evening clothes for the parents packed alongside our camping paraphernalia and Mona, our beautiful standard poodle.

### **Little Shuswap Lake**

Dad had always loved the dry interior weather and, as age began to cramp their style, he and Mom leased a parcel of land from the Aboriginal people on Little Shuswap Lake. Though not particularly handy with tools, Dad and my brothers Robert and Peter built a lovely, somewhat rustic, cabin and annex, which served for years as a getaway place for our growing family.

During this period, Dad and Mom became proud in-laws when, in 1969, John married Anne Pepall and I married Pierre Duchastel and, in 1972, when Robert married Cushla Croucher. They then became proud grandparents with the births of John's children—Catherine in 1970, Devon in 1972 and Matthew in 1980—and my children, Jean-Pierre in 1972 and Nicole in 1974.

Little Shuswap became a favourite holiday spot for young and growing grandchildren. Uncle Peter was often there with one of a series of preferred girlfriends. The entertainment was simple: a stray diving wharf, a canoe, a small rowboat and outboard motor and lots of pristine walking space. Dad was an avid fly fisherman, spending a week each year at Pennask Lake with what we considered his "old crony friends", though his stories of moot courts and penalties for minor silly fishing offences sounded kind of fun.

Mom loved to eat fresh rainbow trout, so the grandchildren fished for hours with Dad and, when not swimming and boating, they tried their hands at cutting wood, building campfires, walking through alpine meadows and playing badminton over a net that Dad strung up between two trees. Life was simple, relaxing and intimate. In 1989, after 49 years of marriage and at the age of 79, Mom died peacefully at the cottage that she loved.

### **The Dean's Lady**

Dad liked women, and his life was enriched by them. He believed in loyalty, courtesy and respect, and always encouraged women to pursue their dreams.

After Mom's death, he found companionship with Joey Ashdown, an extraordinary woman in her late 70s who, years earlier in Halifax, had helped Mother lure Dad into marriage! As octogenarians, Joey and Dad had a great time together. They spent their summers at Shuswap and, every spring, travelled to Joey's timeshare in Hawaii. They also had a number of stays at the New Cavendish Club in London, England, where they entertained the Curtis relatives and offspring. Joey was witty, good natured and spunky. They kept one another going.

Dad's genuine warmth and interest in women's lives drew them to him. Until the end of his life, he was surrounded by many lovely young women, some Peter's

ex-girlfriends, others ex-boarders or their friends and, in particular, the very special Deborah Hamilton.

### **Christmas Dinners**

Dad loved company, and Christmas dinner was particularly special to him. In the early days, when we were children, Christmas regulars were Pappy Reid, the Chalmers and their children, the Bournes and Todds, John and Mrs. Willis, Sperin and Nellie Chant and any new staff member or student who was away from home. In later years, Dad's great friend, the Reverend Dr. Eric Woodhouse, and his wife, daughter Dorothy, and grandson James would be with us regularly, along with Aunt Olive, Joey, Deborah and whichever Curtis children, grandchildren, in-laws and friends were available.

As well as being festive, table talk over dinner at 1808 was always animated, often controversial and sometimes quite loud. Dad was a master raconteur and, when others stole the stage, he would bang on the table for attention or emphasis. As children, he enchanted us with stories of the Prairies and faraway places, my favourite being the puzzle tale of the horse race in Arabia. On his last trip to London in his 98th year, standing in front of Big Ben, he delighted us with a variety of Churchill stories, including one about the Queen of Tonga and her aide-de-camp.

### **Grey Clouds**

All families encounter difficulties, and Dad had his share. He handled challenges and disappointments with discretion, tact and compassion. My separation and divorce were a trial to parents who believed that marriage was for life. Robert's mental illness was severe and long-standing. Dad carried on after Robert's death in 2001, though it greatly affected him. In 1994, Dad himself nearly died of an undiagnosed gall bladder infection and septicemia, after receiving many debilitating treatments for his symptoms. Despite being physically weakened, he bounced back with aplomb—helped by Dr. John Hancock. He outlived many of his contemporaries and students, and that saddened him. He was left lonely by the deaths of Aunt Olive in May 2003 and Joey later that same year.

Yet Dad had little patience for self-pity or sentimentality: as he always said, "On to the next case!" He looked to the future with optimism and lived with passionate interest in the present. He became a great-grandfather in 1999, with the birth of Saskia Gilmer and, in 2002, her brother and his namesake, George. His third great-grandchild, Marguerite Hannan, was born in 2005.

### **The Merry Wives of Allison Road**

With a twinkle in his eye and a quick smile, Dad conferred the honorary title "the Merry Wives of Allison Road" on a group of neighbours who took the initiative in keeping him in the family home. This dedicated entourage included Shelagh Dodd, Judy Dafoe, Corinna Lusk, Kate Levi, Maria Harris, Brune Resse and many others. They contributed substantially to his well-being in the later years. They drove him to appointments, brought food, hung Christmas lights and successfully carried out their self-appointed mission of keeping him at 1808 until his death.

### Je t'aime Papa

I loved my Dad, and, with his death, I lost not only a father but also a friend and mentor.

### GEORGE CURTIS: THE LAWYER AND TEACHER

Dean Emeritus George Curtis needs no introduction to the pages of the *Advocate*. On the occasion of his retirement as dean in 1971, a tribute by R.H. Tupper, Q.C., commenced with "hail and farewell", but the farewell was fortunately delayed for many years. Having continued to teach after retirement, he appeared on the cover in 1987, when he stopped teaching at the age of 81. He passed away last November at the age of 99. To the last week, he had walked from his home on the campus to his office in the law school, where faculty and students dropped in for advice and conversation. He was completely up-to-date with the latest cases and legal developments. It is now time to review that remarkable long life and to reflect on the contributions that he made as an academic to legal education in this province and well beyond.

He came to Vancouver uniquely qualified for a singular task: the instant creation of a university law faculty in a province in which the legal profession had qualified under the traditional system of five years of "articles" supplemented by some lectures by senior members of the bar. Fortunately, after a number of attempts over many years, the bar had convinced itself and a reluctant provincial government of at least the principle of establishing a law faculty, and the University of B.C., under the new presidency of Dr. Norman "Larry" MacKenzie, had agreed to host it. But there were just a few items missing—money, a building and a faculty.

Thus George Curtis came to Vancouver in the late summer of 1945 to face about 80 first-year law students, almost all returning World War II veterans anxious to get back to civilian life and to become lawyers. What unique background and gifts did he bring that made it possible to produce an established school and the first graduating class three years later? A strong work ethic, intelligence, charm, longevity and luck. He grew up in a Saskatchewan farming community and was well used to physical work; he was lucky enough to attend a good Moose Jaw high school, where his top grades were rewarded by a scholarship to university; he was smart enough to start articles (aged 17) in a law firm that entitled him to proceed directly into the University of Saskatchewan Faculty of Law, which provided the standard recognized basic university-based law curriculum then being used in those provinces with a law school. Having graduated at the head of his class, he won a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford and acquired the B.A. (Jur.), again at the head of the class. A year later he acquired the B.C.L. and was runner-up for the top honour, the Vinerian Scholarship. He returned to Saskatchewan to complete his articles and then worked both in private practice and for the provincial government. The Great Depression forced him to seek other employment, and in 1934 he went to teach at Dalhousie University law school, which had a long-established reputation as probably the premier university law school in Canada. He taught there for eleven years.



This then was the background he brought to Vancouver in 1945: he had the experience of five years of articles and some legal practice; he had a standard Canadian university law degree and two Oxford degrees in common law—all with very high standing; he had 11 years of teaching; and he also had a significant background of public speaking, having given public lectures, some delivered in a series on the CBC. His teaching experience was also unique in one particular way that would turn out to be very important. At that time, teaching law in Canada involved classroom loads much heavier than at present, both in terms of class time and in the variety of subject matters one was expected to teach. No law school in Canada had more than four full-time professors. During the 1940s, with enrolment down and some faculty in the armed forces, the situation was even worse. There were only two professors at Dalhousie, George Curtis and John Willis, to carry the full load of administration and the teaching of the whole law curriculum.

Thus George Curtis was truly uniquely qualified and prepared, both academically and administratively, to step into a new school and teach the first year of law with only one other professor and, it is important to add, with generous assistance from the profession. But he had other qualities as well. He was an experienced and accomplished speaker, and he had friends and acquaintances in the legal profession, in academia, in politics—in fact, everywhere. He knew and had the respect of the new president of UBC, Dr. Mackenzie, who was a former law teacher in New Brunswick and who was certainly in favour of establishing a new law faculty.

So the law school was started in 1945. New law schools usually grow slowly, allowing for gradual increases in faculty and facilities. The sudden return of the World War II veterans was a special challenge. George Curtis's efforts, talents of persuasion and contacts were sorely needed and were successful in finding housing for the veterans in what they must have thought they had just left—used army huts, both for residences and classrooms. But at least they were not being shot at and, indeed, morale was high; students and faculty were bonded by "making do". The school grew from 80 in 1945 to 470 in 1949; the faculty grew to seven full-time professors with assistance from five downtown lawyers. George Curtis cajoled a willing bar into major donations of books, and a good library quickly grew. It was housed in the new building, which opened in 1951 and was funded in part by the largest bar donation for a Canadian law school at that time. (A new and larger building was built in the 1970s, but he was no longer dean and cannot be blamed for the shortcomings of that cement bunker.)

George Curtis was qualified and active over the full academic spectrum: as a teacher (he almost always taught at least one course); as dean in recruiting and encouraging new faculty and in establishing relationships between the law school and the judiciary, the law society, the bar, the Canadian Bar Association and other organizations; and as consultant (he was involved in a number of legal policy matters of national and international importance).

As a teacher, he was highly respected in the classroom, both in knowledge and delivery. He had taught many courses. His chief interests were in the law of con-

tract and international law, but he also taught mortgages, property, corporation law and commercial law. He had a compelling voice and the anecdotes and humour to leaven a dry subject. There were some years when his administrative duties for the university itself, as well as for the law school, took him away from teaching more than he wished. After retirement, he taught regularly and charmed classes for 15 more years as the *eminence grise* of the law school and was in his office most days, available to faculty and students alike, giving both academic and personal advice until his last days.

As dean, he was involved in the development of the curriculum over the years. Although in 1945 he had put in place the standard 1920s Canadian Bar-approved syllabus which he had experienced at both Saskatchewan and Dalhousie, he was a leader in introducing new subjects such as income tax, international law and personal property security. Indeed, on the page of the 1971 *Advocate* just before the tribute mentioned above, there is a report on the "new optional curriculum", over which there was some controversy at the time across Canada (vol. 29, p. 151). He had guided a meeting of the Conference of Governing Bodies (Canadian Law Societies) on this topic to an acceptance of a broader range of optional subjects within a range of "recommended" subjects, in the context of recognition between provinces of various law degrees. This broadening of the strict curriculum fitted in well with another of his accomplishments, the links that he fostered between



*Dean Curtis during a visit with Lord Denning.*



“town and gown”, the law school and the profession. Ably assisted by his wife Doris, he encouraged the association of his faculty with downtown, both socially and professionally, thus bringing the talents of the bar and the judiciary into the law school. The number of downtowners (now known as adjunct professors) gradually grew over the years and enabled the school to offer many special courses and seminars to enrich the expanding curriculum.

As an academic, he was a speaker at many conferences, delivering papers on a wide range of subjects, chief among which were legal education, law reform and constitutional law. As an academic lawyer, he was engaged as a consultant and advocate in many commissions and government inquiries. The list is far too long to relate here, and a few examples will have to suffice. He was highly instrumental in setting up and monitoring the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarships. He was the Canadian delegate to the United Nations and deeply involved in the law of the sea for many years, particularly in the Canadian sea boundaries matters. He was involved in combines inquiries; a member of the Electoral Boundaries Commission; a delegate and speaker at numerous education conferences, legal and non-legal; and a founder of the Canadian Association of Law Teachers, creating an annual forum for law teachers to give academic papers and exchange views in person. He was a long-standing officer of the YMCA.

His service in all of these varied capacities has not gone without recognition. He received most of the degrees, honours and medals that universities, the profession, the province and the federal government can bestow. However, among all the honours and tributes he received, I think the one that would be dearest to his heart was a petition of 507 signatures on several pages of foolscap, collected at the law school between March 12 and 26, 1976, and addressed to the president of UBC.

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, recognizing that Dr. George F. Curtis was the founding Dean of this law school and served it well as Dean for twenty-seven years;

As well as performing the duties of Dean, he has been teaching the law at U.B.C. for 31 years since 1945;

And recognizing, with gratitude, his ability to impart a knowledge and understanding of the law, its history and foundations, without neglecting the needs for change and reform;

And recognizing his individual compassion to the students and their problems;

DO HEREBY PROPOSE that the new law building be named, in his honour, the George F. Curtis Law Building.

That proposal was honoured. One might wish that the quality of the building matched that of its namesake, but it was surely a tribute of which any academic could be proud.

### GEORGE CURTIS: THE LAWYER AND NEIGHBOUR

George Curtis was a common law lawyer. As he told the Bench and Bar Dinner in his “farewell” address in 1986, he had been one since, as a 17-year-old, he “first polished up the handle of the big front door” of N. R. Craig, Barristers and Solicitors, in Moose Jaw in 1924.

Indeed, George remained a common law lawyer to the end. He loved what he saw as its essential nature. On that evening in 1986, George reminded his audience that the common law is intrinsically oral and collegial. It is made and grows, he said, in the conference room, the classroom and the courtroom. And he devoted much of his professional life to forging the links between the classroom and the courtroom, between the university and the profession, in the name of legal reform. George, in so many ways, personified the best of the common law. He was nothing if not oral and collegial. His young friend Deborah Hamilton, in her eulogy to him delivered at the Faculty Club he did so much to save, spoke for many when she described George as the best storyteller she had ever known.

George thrived on talking. He acknowledged as much, saying recently: "All I know is what I should do is keep quiet, and I have tried. I can't keep quiet because people ask me questions." Living next door to George for the last six years, I came to know how true that was. In later years, George had become hard of hearing. On sunny days he would sit on his back deck—great romantic music flooding the neighbourhood—and hold court, each new arrival greeted by great shouts of welcome. It was impossible not to become engaged by the conversation. George's rich and glorious voice would resonate through the rhododendrons and, amidst laughing and joking, George would listen and talk and answer questions. There was not a subject that did not interest him nor an issue of weight to which he was indifferent. He brought his experience and the past to illuminate the present and the challenges of the future. People of all ages, neighbours and friends, turned to him for counsel but above all for friendship and "a jolly good chat". His discourse was a vibrant, living application of what he himself saw as the strength of the case law method; a drawing on past experience as a guide to present conduct. As he would say, "Out of old fields comes new corn." It was the new corn that really engaged him, that and the concerns, interests and enthusiasms of the people around him.

Everyone who knew him would recognize George's collegiality. It originated, I believe, in his insatiable curiosity about and interest in people as individuals. As Dean Curtis, George painted on a broad canvas and was engaged by large issues. But his interest in professional education or international law or legal reform did not divert his attention from the importance of the individual. I suspect that interest in and engagement with those larger public questions was animated by a conviction that the ultimate justification of the rule of law as the bedrock of a civilized society lies in the law's capacity to respond to the needs of individuals in all their particularity and vulnerability.

Certainly George responded to people as he found them, and he did so with unmatched warmth and generosity of spirit. After George's death, I read and was told so many stories that demonstrated that he thought only the best of people and acted on that belief. John Fraser tells us that Dean Curtis would not abandon the honour system in place for the conduct of exams at the law school even though he knew that some were abusing it. There are lawyers whose careers turned on being given a second chance and an opportunity to redeem themselves that today they might not get. Without exception, whenever he spoke about his fellow

professionals he always fastened on their virtues. As Deb Hamilton recounted, his favourite descriptions of people included: exceptional, wise, hard working, highly respected, responsible, honest, a keen negotiator, kind and compassionate. In my chats with him he never uttered an unkind word about anyone. Even when he disagreed with a decision or a course of conduct, he searched for and found extenuating circumstances.

George's collegiality spilled over, out of academia and the profession, and into the neighbourhood in which he lived for 60 years. In his later years, George walked the neighbourhood, every day, with the aid of his walker. At the ceremony to honour George held in the law courts, Bertie McClean told how George would walk slowly along the road pushing his walker ahead of him. Not infrequently cars would queue up patiently behind him as he made a deliberate, steady, indeed stately progress along the street. Bertie explained that George took to the road because the sidewalks in the University Endowment Lands were too narrow to cope with the walker. I beg to differ. George used the roadway because it gave the neighbours he would meet the opportunity to walk along side him, exchanging news and discussing issues of concern. In that way, George remained intimately connected with his neighbourhood. The cars could wait; maintaining bonds of community mattered more.

George knew everyone in the UEL, and everyone knew George. On his walks he would talk law with the lawyers, he would discuss local politics, he would chat about families and everyday goings-on. He was, in this domain, what he was in so many others. He was interested and engaged, and he had a memory that stretched back over the decades and had forgotten nothing. He was a repository of wisdom and advice, and the community turned to him repeatedly.

George Curtis cared about this little community, and through his life he worked to make it a better place in ways that mattered to people. In this way, he lived a seamless life. In the academic world he had worked tirelessly to bring people together. He was a principal architect of the Commonwealth Scholarship Program that allowed young scholars from the Commonwealth to study in each other's countries. I well remember the delight and pride he showed when he discovered that my wife was one of his scholars. His was a delight and pride that owed everything to the value of the opportunity and experience it provided to her and nothing to any immodest pride in his own achievement. He worked to combine the resources of the profession and the university to provide quality legal education, he played a hand in the creation of organizations to bring together Canadian students and university teachers and so much more.

Out in our peculiar little enclave, a residential neighbourhood that is not part of Vancouver, is not a separate municipality and is governed directly from Victoria, George set about organizing an association to represent the interests of residents. The organization exists to this day and is the means through which the voice of the community is articulated. Characteristically, George continued to be interested in its affairs and was always available to be consulted, as he was frequently, as issues arose.

George also worked to bring together people of faith. A life-long Anglican, and a devotee of the *Book of Common Prayer*, George, together with others in the area, recognized decades ago that families living on the Hill, as he referred to it, needed a centre for “spiritual development and nourishment”. The original plan was to develop an ecumenical facility. George had seen and was attracted to a dais at MIT that could revolve and provide altars for the worship of different faiths. Despite dipping into baby bonds to fund construction, sufficient moneys were not available to implement that plan. A loan was taken from the Anglican Diocese, and so St. Anselm’s parish, named after the second archbishop of Canterbury, the scholar saint, was established. It has remained true to its original ecumenical spirit, however, much to George’s satisfaction, by sharing its facilities with other denominations over the years. George was rightly proud of its building on University Boulevard, writing in the early 1990s: “The symbolism of Abraham’s tent has warmed and pleased so many these thirty years past. It was a skilful blend of new materials, new techniques, and new ideas of design, with the permanence of the old and traditional as represented by the splendid east masonry wall.” In some respects, George could have been describing his own character.

In 1986, George was the first recipient of the Law Society Award. In his acceptance remarks he described his “commission” to combine the resources of the profession and the university to provide quality legal education. He chose his words carefully. It was typical of George to use the language of duty and obligation. Late in life, as George looked back over his career, as Deb Hamilton told us, George described himself as being “in service” to others. How blessed we, in the profession, and friends and neighbours, have been to have known such a devoted servant.

At the beginning of his remarks that night, George spoke initially as a professional man, observing that “no honour is of greater value to a professional person than the approbation of fellow professionals”. Later, as he looked around the room, he paid a tribute to his life partner. He said he thought he could do so because he was among friends. He told how in the formative years of the law school the first care of his wife, Doris, was for the female staff and female students. The prime ministers, the lord justices of appeal and the rest came afterwards. All told, he said, it was the warm and skilful exercise of the ancient art of hospitality as known in her native Nova Scotia. “Aucht—there’s a visitor coming up the walk, Angus. Throw another herring in the pot.” George lived by those same lights. Yes, he was a professional, admired and respected by his peers, but first and foremost he lived and worked among friends.

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