

Ron Whistance-Smith



In Memorium

This is a brief note to let you know that Ron died in the early hours of the morning of September 25. He was peaceful and slipped away surrounded by family. We had spent a wonderful day in vigil and I'm sure he could hear our stories, hymns, prayers, and laughter. We were supported by love and appreciation for Ron's influence and gifts to us, his family and friends, and although we mourn his passing, we know and believe his journey continues with a different roadmap. A memorial service celebrating Ron's life was held September 30.

Thank you for your concern and positive thoughts and prayers over the past months and I know both of us have been upheld by them. I also know that your love and thoughts will continue especially over the next few days and weeks. Without love and care for one another this mortal journey would be lonely and, at times, so discouraging.

The loving care and respect that Ron and the family received from all the staff of the Mel Miller Hospice his past three months were a gift of ministry that we will always remember. In lieu of flowers, and in celebration of Ron's life, we invite you to consider supporting this hospice ministry. Their address is: Mel Miller Hospice, 11111 Jasper Ave., Edmonton, AB. T5K 0L4.

- Rena Whistance-Smith

Ron Whistance-Smith had been the map librarian at the William C. Wonders Map Collection at the University of Alberta and was a long-time member of WAML.

- Kathy Rankin



Ron with his wife Rena.

When Ron Whistance-Smith passed away on September 25, 2003, map librarianship lost a person with a great knowledge of maps and a huge amount of enthusiasm for helping people use them and enjoy them. Ron died at the age of 67, in Edmonton, after a short battle with cancer.

Ron built the University of Alberta's William C. Wonders Map Collection into the largest academic map collection in Canada. He worked tirelessly to add to the collection by searching catalogs, visiting foreign collections, and investigating auctions and sales. At one time he also created the History of Cartography Room from a back storage room at the request of the lecturer for a new course in the history of cartography. Ron also shared maps with others by driving to WAML meetings with his car full of maps for the duplicate map exchange.

David Jones, who is now the head of the map collection, said, "He had a fantastic knowledge of Canadian maps. He was wonderful at infecting people with 'cartophilia'. He was bubbling with interest and knowledge in what he did."

Ron also contributed greatly to map librarian organizations: He served as WAML's president in 1984-85, as secretary in 1985-86, as a member of the Publications Advisory Committee from 1980-1986, served on the Nominating Committee in 1979-80 and 1984-85, and was WAML's representative to the Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives (ACMLA). In September 1981, he hosted a meeting of WAML at Edmonton. He made presentations at meetings, and he wrote many book reviews for the IB. Ron was on the ACMLA Executive Board for one year and was Publications Editor for a number of years.

In 1995 WAML awarded him an honorary life membership, and in 2000, at a joint meeting of WAML, ACMLA, and the Canadian Cartographic Association, he received the ACMLA Honours Award. Fran Woodward said, "A conference without Ron is like a dish without that special ingredient."

Ron married Rena Glover in Toronto in 1959. After leaving the RCAF, Ron plotted weather maps at the Toronto/Malton Airport for the Canadian Meteorological Service. When he decided on a change of careers for health reasons, he was hired by the University of Waterloo to set up a new map library, so he and Rena and their four children moved to Waterloo. This position required a degree, so Ron completed an Honors Geography BA degree at Waterloo Lutheran University. In 1970 the family moved to Edmonton so Ron could work on a master's degree in climatology.

In 1971 Ron became interim curator of the William C. Wonders Map Collection, which at that time was part of the Geography Department. He was hired as curator in 1973. Ron retired in 1994, but he continued to volunteer in the map library and to hunt down maps to enrich the collection. Ron also collected antiquarian maps and roadmaps. His map collection will be donated to the university, according to his wishes.

As his wife Rena says, "All of us are better people for having known Ron, and although we mourn his passing, we know and believe his journey continues with a different roadmap."



*Picture of the past presidents being recognized at the 20th anniversary meeting in Reno.
Contributed by Linda Newman, University of Nevada, Reno.*