

Robin T. B. Rye, 1934 – 2009

by Laurie Colebrook

Robin T. B. Rye was born in Vancouver in 1934. He had entertaining stories of the spartan conditions of his school life at the Vernon Preparatory School for Boys - a boarding school in the old British tradition. He graduated with a B.Sc. and M.Sc. (with Dr Basil Dunnell) in Chemistry from the University of British Columbia, then he completed (1957-60) a Ph.D. in Chemistry at University College, London, working on pyrolysis of amides with Dr Allan Maccoll. Returning to Canada, he held a post-doctoral fellowship (1960-62) with Dr Fred P. Lossing at the National Research Council, Ottawa, working on projects employing mass spectrometry.

His first academic appointment was at Brandon College, Brandon, Manitoba in 1962 but, as a native of British Columbia, he did not take kindly to the winter conditions on the Prairies. He joined the Department of Chemistry, Sir George Williams University, in 1964, and he taught courses in Physical Chemistry for the remainder of his career.

Robin was responsible for the operation, maintenance, and upgrading of the mass spectrometry facilities at Sir George Williams University from the time the Chemistry Department moved into the Hall Building, and his research interests remained concentrated in the mass spectrometry field. He taught graduate level courses in mass spectrometry. He had a long and very fruitful research association with Dr John L. Holmes, of the University of Ottawa - he spent Leave time in Ottawa, and made frequent visits to work in the Ottawa laboratory. He published extensively with Dr Holmes, as well as with his own research students and colleagues. As mini and personal computers became available, he worked on digitization and computer processing of mass spectrometry data.

Robin developed a deep interest in genealogy as he tracked the history of his family, and he was a member of the Quebec Family History Society. The Ryes originally migrated from England to New Zealand, where they joined a new settlement on the Kaipara Harbour, north of Auckland. These were hard times for settlers, in a remote area, so the Ryes migrated again, this time to Western Canada.

Robin enjoyed sailing, and he crewed for other members of the Department. He taught courses for the West Island Squadron of the Canadian Power and Sail Squadron. His hobbies also included amateur radio, dating back to his student days at the University of British Columbia.

He was by nature somewhat reserved, but he was liked and highly respected by his students and all of his colleagues.

Robin passed away in the West Island Palliative Care Residence on October 7, 2009. He is survived by his wife, Carmen, his daughters Leslie and Karen, his brother Darrell, and four grandchildren.