

Murray Smith ACER-CART President 1999-2001 Biography



MURRAY R. SMITH O.M. passed away peacefully from cancer, at home, with his family present, on Sunday evening, December 15, 2002. He was survived by his wife of over 50 years Muriel and eight grandchildren who were the light of his life. Murray held degrees from the Universities of Manitoba, London and Oxford where he was a Rhodes scholar. As an undergraduate he was editor of the Manitoban and he later served on the Board of Governors of the University of Manitoba, an institution to which he remained devoted throughout his life, endowing and contributing to several scholarships. Murray's time in Oxford, where he and Muriel were married in 1952, influenced him to fall in love with London and music, passions he returned to time and time again over the years.

From 1966 to 1967 the family enjoyed an invaluable year in central London. Teaching was Murray's vocation. During his career with the Winnipeg School Division he worked as a teacher of mathematics, an administrator, deputy assistant superintendent of schools and a guidance counsellor. He was a memorable teacher remembered fondly by many of his students. He believed, in the words of John Dewey, in the great and human significance of every task undertaken by students, and often quoted from and expanded on the poem "Children Learn What They Live." In concert with this, he believed in the value of teachers as the shapers of society. He fought long and hard for better pay, pensions and working conditions for his colleagues.

He served as president of the Manitoba Teachers Society (2004-05), the Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba (1998-99) and the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers (1999-2001). He brought the same commitment to his work with Seniors, as Chair of the Manitoba Council of Aging, at the Manitoba Society of Seniors (MSOS), and at Creative Retirement, as an advocate, author of many articles, and a voluntary tax advisor. He strongly believed in the role of the public sector to serve the common good through support for health care, education, social services and culture.

He served for 12 years on the Board of the Health Sciences Centre, two years as part-time Chair, and consistently followed and contributed to debates on the health care system. From the 1970s, he was an ardent supporter of the women's movement and is warmly remembered by many Manitoba women for his genuine and unconditional support. This concern for social justice extended globally through his work as treasurer for the Nicaraguan Children's Fund. A devoted athlete in his later years, Murray participated in marathons and triathlons. Through all his various passions, Murray has instructed and inspired many teachers, musicians, and political and social activists, both within the family and in the community.