

In Memoriam - The Honourable Justice W. Andrew MacKay

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When you open the doors of the Weldon law building you are drawn up a set of stairs. Embedded in the landing of those stairs is the University crest. It features a flying phoenix, tiled in black, on a white shield, over a gold background. The University motto spreads over the phoenix: *Ora et Labora*.

Having reached the crest in the landing, take the stairs on your right. Head toward the Sir James Dunn Law Library. The first portrait you pass is W. Andrew MacKay. He sports a brown suit. He resides comfortably in academic robes. His soft brown eyes look out at you, thoughtfully.

Justice MacKay passed away on January 12. He served as a beloved professor of constitutional law at our School and later as vice-president and president of Dalhousie. He chaired the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. He served as a judge of the Federal Court of Canada.

His obituary is below, and you can read more on his Dal legacy on [Dal News](#).

When I arrived at the School in July 2010, I was received by former Deans MacKay and Charles. They stood solemnly in the too-warm Dean's conference room (or, perhaps, Deans' conference room). We shook hands. They asked about my plans for our School. They laughed (at me, perhaps, at my answers to their questions, most certainly). They badgered each other, gently. They encouraged each other to tell stories about the School's past and they engaged with enthusiasm in discussions about our future.

Andy dropped by my office regularly and we crossed paths at every major event at the School, where he attended as a distinguished guest. In June 2012 he dropped by my office to pass on a framed copy of "The University," the text of a presentation to convocation authored by John Masefield and presented at the University of Sheffield in 1946. The piece had hung in Andy's office during his time as Dean at this School. In his inscription to me he claims, he "found it re-invigorating to remind myself of the simply wonderful endeavour we were engaged in."

It concludes with these lines:

wherever a University stands, it stands and shines:
wherever it exists, the free minds of man,
urged on to full and fair inquiry,
may still bring wisdom into human affairs.

W. Andrew MacKay made a remarkable contribution to our School and to the University as a whole. He was, in the fullest sense, a champion of the University - both Dalhousie specifically and the broader idea of the University as a place where we test ideas and explore hard questions.

He embodied the spirit of our motto - most especially the virtue of hard work. He is part of a legacy of those who asked great questions before we arrived at Dal and who built the place from which we are able to pursue full and fair inquiry, and more so, wisdom.

If the world seems a little quieter, it is because we have lost a giant.

Kim Brooks
Dean, Schulich School of Law

The Honourable Justice William Andrew MacKay, 83, died peacefully surrounded by his family, January 12, 2013 in Halifax.

Born March 20, 1929, in Halifax, and graduated from Dalhousie University, he served as a much loved Professor of Constitutional Law and Dean of Law and later as Vice-President and President of Dalhousie University. He chaired the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission and was Ombudsman of Nova Scotia. He served as a Judge of the Federal Court of Canada.

A sportsman, educator and administrator of justice, Andy was the embodiment of selfless service. He believed passionately in education and was a proud support of his alma mater. He will be remembered by all who knew him as a true gentleman with boundless generosity and a keen sense of humour. He lived according to his own credos: be kind to others, be yourself, love life. He touched the hearts of many and even a brief encounter left an impression. He was a giant among men without making others feel small.

His family was his great love and joy. He was the devoted husband of 68 years of Alexa E. Wright; loving father of Margaret MacKay and adored and adoring "Bampi" to Alexandra, Kathleen and David Archibald, and step grandfather of Ona Archibald; step great-grandfather of Sophia White; dear brother of Mary MacKay and Janet Brown, Ottawa, and Edith (Gordon) Haliburton, Wolfville; beloved uncle to many nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews. He was predeceased by his parents, Robert A. MacKay and Kathleen Junkin.

A celebration of his life will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, January 19 in St. Andrew's United Church, 6036 Coburg Rd., Halifax, led by Rev. Russell Daye. Reception to follow in the church hall, Coburg Road. A private family interment will take place in Fairview Cemetery. Donations may be made to Dalhousie University, St. Andrew's United Church, or any charity of choice. Messages of condolence may be sent to the family by visiting: jasnowfuneralhome.com