

ROMPKEY, Ronald George (Ron) [UNTD CABOT '61] (1943 - 2014) Age: 71



A well-known academic and writer in Newfoundland and Labrador has died.

Ronald Rompkey was an English professor for many years at Memorial University and was involved in the creation of books that explored the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. Rompkey, 70, was reportedly battling amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, otherwise known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Born in St. John's, he pursued a master's degree in English at MUN and later completed his PhD in English at the University of London in England.

His teaching career included stints at the University of Victoria, the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan. He joined MUN's English department in 1984 and maintained a strong presence at the university for the next 30 years.

The University of Toronto Press published his biography of British doctor Sir Wilfred Thomason Grenfell — "Grenfell of Labrador: A Biography" — in 1991, detailing the doctor's efforts to bring medical services to parts of the province that otherwise had none. As editor, he published three other books related to Grenfell's missions.

Rompkey was also interested in the arts. His book of essays on visual artists Reginald Shepherd and Helen Parsons Shepherd — "A Life Composed: Reginald Shepherd & Helen Parsons Shepherd" — earned him an Atlantic Book Award in 2006.

He spent time as chairman for the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, was a board member for the Canadian Conference of the Arts, and served as vice-president of CultureNet for five years.

He was also at one point the director of the J.R. Smallwood Foundation for Newfoundland and Labrador Studies, which supports research into the province's history.

France honoured Rompkey with its Ordre National du Mérite to recognize his contributions to the French community of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie recognized him for those same attributes with its Ordre de la Pléiade.

Rompkey spent several years researching travel literature authored by French visitors, including ship captains, naval officers and journalists. Rompkey included some of those pieces in the book, "Terre-Neuve: Anthologie des Voyageurs Français, 1814-1914."

Rompkey was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2003.

He was the brother of Bill Rompkey, a former MP and senator.

A funeral service is scheduled to take place Aug. 5 at the Anglican Cathedral in St. John's starting at 11 a.m. arobinson@thetelegram.com

The younger brother of Senator Bill Rompkey (UNTD CABOT '54), Ron had amassed a long list of academic and literary accolades. He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2003 and was the CO of HMCS CABOT from 1984 - 88, retiring from the Naval Reserve as a Commander. He was known from coast to coast both in the Naval and Academic world and I'm sure we'll hear more about Ron in the days ahead. On a personal note, he was the Course Officer for the 1968 Communications Course Alpha (photo attached), and I was fortunate to be one of his "happy campers".

Regards, Bill Clearihue.

1968 - May to August - Communications Course Alpha (A/SLT's) - CFB HALIFAX (STADACONA)



4th Row: George Nijdam - Doug Taylor - Alex Blackwood - Kevin Harrity - Wendell Sanford
3rd Row: Brian McConnell - Mike Brownlow - Dennis Bowman - Jim Reicker - Jim Vavasour
2nd Row: John McArthur - Emerson Mills - Bill Clearihue - Ken Hadley - Wally Yates
1st Row: LT(N) Ron Rompkey - LT(N) Jim Wells