

In Memoriam - Leslie Gordon Jaeger

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In Memoriam - Leslie Gordon Jaeger

The Faculty of Engineering is saddened to report the passing of one of our most distinguished Professors Dr. Leslie Jaeger. Leslie died at 87 in Halifax after a brief illness, bravely borne.

Predeceased by his first wife Sylvia, his brother Kenneth, and stepson John Grant, he is survived by his wife Kathleen, sister Beatrix, daughters Valerie (Michael) and Hilary (Christopher), grandchildren Marc (Courteney) and Alexandra, niece Merrill and nephews David, Ian and Roger.

Leslie Gordon Jaeger: *P. Eng., Fellow of the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering, Canadian Academy of Engineering, Engineering Institute of Canada, The Royal Society of Edinburgh, BA, MA, Cantab. Ph.D, D.Sc, University of London, D.Eng (honoris causa) Carleton University, Memorial University, Technical University of Nova Scotia, LLD (honoris causa) Dalhousie University, Member, Order of Canada.*

Born in Southport, England, after graduating from Cambridge Leslie served for two years as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. He then taught at the University of London College in Khartoum, returning to the U.K. to become Director of Studies at Magdalene College, Cambridge and later Regius Professor of Engineering at the University of Edinburgh. In 1962 he emigrated to Canada to join the faculty of McGill University. Subsequently he became Dean of Engineering at the University of New Brunswick, Vice President (Academic) at Acadia University and Vice President (Research) at the Technical University of Nova Scotia, ending his career as Professor Emeritus, Dalhousie University. He was the author of 9 books and 180 refereed articles on earthquake engineering, advanced structural analysis and bridge design and remained active in research long after his retirement, primarily through his work with the ISIS Canada Research Centre of Excellence at the University of Manitoba. He was honored by the profession with a number of awards, including the Gzowski and Leipholtz medals.

Throughout his career Leslie had many graduate students and colleagues from overseas, and during the 1980s these contacts led to his being involved in several interesting projects and lecture tours in India, China and Pakistan. He was recognized for these efforts by being appointed Honorary Professor of Civil Engineering at Tong Ji University, Shanghai and Honorary President of the Usman Institute of Technology, Karachi.

After their retirements from academic life, Leslie and Kathleen thought to move to Victoria, but chose instead to remain in Halifax, a decision neither ever regretted. For many years golf and curling were Leslie's favourite diversions, but later, once Kathleen had persuaded him that travel did not necessarily have to be connected with work, his greatest pleasure came from their frequent European holidays.. In May of this year, they visited his favourite city, Paris, for the last time together.

Cheerful and unassuming in manner, generous with his time and talents, Leslie was always ready to help anyone who sought his advice. At 62, he was confirmed in the Anglican Church and over the years devoted considerable time and effort to parish and diocesan affairs, especially in financial matters. A man who positively enjoyed preparing an income tax return, he had made a study of retirement planning that was most helpful to friends and family members.

One of his most amiable qualities was his readiness to rejoice sincerely in the successes of others, family members, friends and associates, even students he had not seen for decades. Leslie was a patient mentor, inspiring teacher, daring researcher, outstanding applied mathematician and able administrator, but above all he was a loyal friend to all sorts and conditions of men and women and a dearly beloved husband, brother, father and grandfather. He touched the lives of many. He will be sorely missed.

Cremation has already taken place. A memorial service for Leslie will be held in the University of King's College Chapel, Coburg Road, Halifax on Saturday, September 14, at 1.p.m., the Rev. Dr. Gary Thorne and Rev. Dr. Tom Curran officiating. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Dalhousie University or St. Augustine's Anglican Church, Jollimore, Halifax.

Comments from Professor M. Saeed Mirza of McGill University

I met Leslie when he first joined McGill in the fall of 1962. I was immediately overwhelmed with his high level of intellect, his excellent leadership qualities, good humor and above all a deep concern as a human being for every one close to him. I will always remain very proud that I was his first Ph.D. candidate. He was the best teacher I ever had during my school, college and university days. As his teaching assistant, I would occasionally attend his classes, and simply marvel at his outstanding communication skills in teaching first year engineering or advanced graduate courses. He had a unique and rare knack of reducing some extremely complex concepts to the simplest terms, and get the students to clearly understand and apply them. He basically taught me how to be a good teacher. I am eternally grateful to Leslie for the opportunity to work with him.

In addition, Leslie was a brilliant researcher and an excellent professional engineer, who could visualize difficult engineering problems and find appropriate solutions, which were easily applied in many complex situations. There are several existing applications which would vouch for his clarity of vision and engineering skills in the safe and sustainable solutions developed by him. I know of some of these when I worked with him at McGill. He has been involved in many more projects since then, as is evident by the several awards, prizes and fellowships and honorary doctorates bestowed on him during his illustrious career. He richly deserved every one of these and, above all, he was the most deserving recipient of the Order of Canada.

Leslie was a unique and an outstanding human being, a daring and brilliant researcher and a truly outstanding engineer who was always ahead of the times, and a dedicated and excellent teacher. He was a tremendous mentor, research director, teacher and above all a most considerate friend to me. My family, colleagues at McGill who knew him and I will miss him dearly.