

mumbling to my parents as we leafed through potential university programs. The Biogeography program gave me a valuable spatio-temporal perspective on why wildlife exists where it does, and I have carried that training throughout my career.

I especially recall Martin Kellman's field trips on plants, soil and glaciers; Alan Hill letting us play with expensive spectrometer equipment; and Rick Bello telling us in the last Climatology class that "we know as much as he does, so move on". Given my grade, I figured he must not know much! but as a professor myself now I can see the value in giving the graduating class confidence to apply themselves.

After York, I did a Masters and Doctorate in Geography at University of Waterloo, and now am Director of several wildlife research centres at the University of New Brunswick, and a cross-appointed professor in the Faculties of Forestry and Science (Biology).

Although my forestry students think being trained in geography means I only know the capitol city name for Burkina Faso, geography is a great foundation and I find it is a simple task to show how an understanding of space and time ties together ecology and management. And the capitol of Burkina Faso is Ouagadougou.

Regards, Graham Forbes

forbes@unb.ca

Gail Shimoda M.A. '81

OLD FACULTY FRIENDS

This is the second in our series of biographical sketches on the retired faculty members of the Geography Department at York University. Professor at York from 1967 until his retirement in 1983, Roy I. Wolfe must surely have added not a little ginger to a discipline whose seasoning certainly needed correcting in the 1960s.

Roy I. Wolfe – A Biography

Roy was born in Staszow, Poland in 1917, of Jewish parents who, he freely says, were committed communists. As a youth in Cabbagetown, Roy attended Jarvis Collegiate, where he remained oblivious to schoolmate and future wife Rosemary.

In first form Roy was introduced to what must have been a particularly dismal avatar of geography. Heavily freighted by lists of "tons of coal and inches of rain and whatnot," he loathed geography, but did take an interest in biology. His delight in Dickens' works was enhanced during a stay at the Star's Fresh Air Camp in Bolton; he and his cabin mates dubbing their cabin "NickNick," after *Nicholas Nickleby*. In the depth of the Great Depression, steeped in parental influence and Dickens, Roy's oral presentation that year



was on "Unemployment, Overproduction, and Want." He might have leapfrogged David Harvey's blinding conversion to structuralism then and there, but a more winding course was in store.

During World War II, Roy served in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, working as technician in a Belgian military hospital. Later he pursuing his early interest in biology to a Master's program at the University of Toronto under the careful tutelage of Norma Ford Walker. It is to her he credits his later pernickety-ness as a professor. As well, her advice to simply be the best in the world at his chosen specialty encouraged Roy to surmount the crushing blow of his sudden deafness. He switched to geography.

At the University of Toronto, with Hartshorne still in flower, Roy revered Donald Putnam and George Tatham, whom he

regarded as "the complete geographer." He also admired fellow student Bill Wonders. But Tatham never considered Roy to be a real geographer. No dispute there; still fresh from biology, he saw himself as a human ecologist. Not a scientist, but if anything, a humanist.

As lead of the "Griffithites," Roy admired Griffith Taylor too; in fact he became a geographer because of his influence. From him also, Roy adopted the use of slides in lecturing. On becoming his supervisor, however, Taylor stifled Roy's ambition to specialize in the urbanization of Wasaga Beach. "Too sociological; do the tourist industry of Ontario," he was firmly told. And so it was. In 1956, Roy produced his dissertation on *Recreational Land Use in Ontario*.

Thus launched, while visiting scholar in Seattle at the University of Washington in 1960-61, Roy apparently convinced the spatial theorists there that he was a genuine quantitative geographer. A Canadian recreation and tourism geographer



"Morus - winter view."

consulted for this work (but who shall remain nameless) still finds his 1964 paper in *Geographical Review* to be a superb conceptual schema of all the variables involved in outdoor recreation and the distance relations between them. His reputation amongst Swedish tourism and recreation geographers is said to remain solid to this day.

As Geographer in the Traffic and Planning Studies Section, Department of Highways Ontario, Roy

published his spatial theories of travel behaviour in a number of reports published by the Department between 1966 and 1969.

As a result, he earned the sobriquet of "Godfather" of North American recreation and tourism geography. The Association of American Geographers sponsored the Roy Wolfe Award in his honour.

These works kept his reputation as spatial modeler in high orbit, but Roy was never a true believer in theory for its own sake. Peeking out from an otherwise tightly-disciplined technical style is a healthy skepticism of his own theoretical and data-driven research. Mind you, we see only the briefest flash of today's post-structural critique of spatial theory. But in his 1963 monograph *Transportation and Politics* (Toronto: D. Van Nostrand Company Inc.) Roy clearly hedged all bets. In an engaging style, historically informed and uncommonly literate, there is nothing of the spatial theorist and modeler. As Roy penned to himself in his battered copy of Hartshorne, we do see in this monograph that "geography is synthesis, correlation, integration, and uses the *results*, not the *methods*, of science." Simple observation and conjecture - and fun.

In 1967, Roy was recruited to York University by then Chair John Warkentin. Years later, Roy entrusted to him his cherished 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Sadly though, *Le Petomane* is nowhere to be found. A dream perhaps?

At York, Roy fought gloriously with visiting scholar Bill Bunge (and who knows but with other colleagues as well?). In 1975-76, with Rosemary, he spent a wonderful sabbatical year lecturing in Europe. Known to some of his York students as "The Wolfman," he seems to have cultivated something of a love-hate relationship with them, periodically offering to kick their teeth. A former student once obliged by sending a dental X-ray. Thorough and merciless in his marking, he demanded much from his students; those who could, profited and grew.

Lecturing without notes and using many slides, Roy engaged in frequent digressions; going "round and round the mulberry bush," as he puts it. He says (surely in jest?) that few ever bothered to take notes; many preferring to argue with him instead. One day, he dispensed with his slides and in magisterial fashion, lectured from a large sheaf of notes, complete with blackboard references. The students dutifully wrote it all down. Later, he distributed his lecture notes to the class - nothing but a series of wavy lines - the references hilariously phony. Just try that trick today! But Roy must have done something right in the classroom, since in 1981 he was recipient of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations Teaching Award.

Retiring from York in 1983, Roy and Rosemary continued to live in the city, at various locations. They have recently moved from their home at the ManuLife Centre to the Kensington Gardens Nursing Home in downtown Toronto. Its ambience is, no doubt, well-seasoned by his presence.



Charlotte McCallum PhD '00 -

THE FRENCHMAN RIVER VALLEY

On my geographical explorations of Canada I have come to rely on the detailed knowledge local people have of their own environment. In fact, once you express a curiosity about their region they are usually eager to show you around.

When I drove into Val Marie, Saskatchewan, the main street was lined with pickup trucks towing trailers carrying cow ponies, for this is cattle country and the cowboys at the bar in the Val Marie Hotel had spent the day helping their neighbours across the border in Montana with calf roping. The people of the Frenchman River Valley have a close bond with their land and environment. It was one of these ranchers who helped me appreciate the geography and human history of this dry grassland environment, and who took the time to guide me through the Val Marie Grasslands and the valley of the Frenchman River. We set off in his 4 wheel drive pick-up truck to get an overview of the valley, heading to a place known as "The Look Out."

Readers of Guy Vanderhaeghe's *The Englishman's Boy* and *The Last Crossing* will be familiar with the Whitemud River or to use its contemporary name, The Frenchman. It's not a mighty stream today, but over its history it has succeeded in cutting a broad swath across southwestern Saskatchewan. We drove across the level short grass prairie to very edge of the steep valley side where we were suddenly confronted by the unfolding view. The valley floor was flat and a pale shade of green except where a dark serpentine of vegetation revealed the route of the actual watercourse. Glacial erratics, sagebrush, greasewort and grazing cattle mantled the bottom of the valley.

Horizontal strata were visible in the valley walls, for this was once the floor of a cretaceous sea that was shallow, tropical and home to grazing dinosaurs. Along the edges of the valley, differential erosion has created a butte and coulee landscape in which large flat topped buttes have been carved out of the prairie by wind, rain and snowmelt. Drainage passages or coulees have been deepened and widened between the buttes.

From "The Look Out" we drove on to the dominant landform in the area, Seventy Mile Butte. Its flat top is the original prairie level and is marked by the triangulated posts of a geodesic survey horizontal control station. The elevation is 3050 feet or 930 metres, making the butte about 500 feet higher than the surrounding land. My rancher and guide explained that the origin of the name is the subject of some debate among local people. Some claim it is so called because you can see for 70 miles from its top; others claim its name comes from its location at the 70 mile mark on the N.W.M.P. trail from Wood Mountain to Fort Walsh. The arid nature of this part of Palliser's Triangle supports only sparse vegetation and speeds up the process of slope erosion. The slopes are moving back at a swift 1 centimetre per year.

The landforms are dramatic but the ecological importance of this part of Saskatchewan comes from one of the most familiar forms of vegetation, grass. Wheat cultivation dominates on the Canadian Prairies and the very high levels of tilled land

have created a monoculture which has squeezed the rich and varied grasslands into this refuge in southwestern Saskatchewan. Because of the rough, heavily eroded terrain and the arid climate, the last unbroken grassland in North America endures, harbouring plants and animals that have disappeared elsewhere on the plains.

Bumping across the prairie we saw a variety of colours. The lavender of smooth blue beardtongue, the rose tone of prairie smoke and the bright gold of corydalis were all evident along with the more rugged prickly pear cactus, pincushion cactus ground hugging juniper, sagebrush and wolf willow. Prior to permanent agricultural settlement, the entire Canadian prairie was covered with such varieties. Now, save for this corner of a few hundred square kilometers, they are gone, ploughed under along with tipi rings, medicine wheels and everything else that made the prairie remarkable.

Wildlife is plentiful in the grasslands and we were fortunate to see jackrabbits, a rare burrowing owl, a horned lark and a long-billed curlew, but most impressive was a small herd of pronghorn antelope, the fastest animal in the area. The herd easily kept pace with our pickup at 100 kph. Unlike grassland's mule deer, which jump barbed wire cattle fences, these small antelope dive under them. As they ran beside us they suddenly wheeled across our path and ran directly at a wire fence. They dropped to their bellies and their long horns flipped the strands of wire up and safely out of the way. This was accomplished with such speed it seemed a single motion.

These grasslands contain the largest prairie dog town in North America and my guide headed there next. The inhabitants are the only black tailed prairie dogs in Canada. They are a large ground squirrel and have an urban geography of their own. Their towns are divided into wards, each of which is further subdivided into coteries. A coterie consists of a family of prairie dogs who cooperatively guard their territory and help raise the young. These animals affect the geomorphology of the prairie by tunneling beneath it and removing 3 or 4 tons of earth per acre. They build clay mounds around the entrances to their tunnels to prevent flooding during sudden rainstorms.

The next stop on our natural history tour was the main denning area or hibernaculum of the prairie rattler in an area where the valley side has slumped away opening up some deep crevices and pits. The first snake we saw was sunning itself on a dirt trail, its scales spread open to catch as much heat as possible. A second one warned us of its presence but scurried away harmlessly through some tall spear grass.

The sky above the rattlesnake den is frequented by golden eagles, the largest birds in the grasslands. They dive down onto rattlers, sweep them up in their talons and drop them onto rocks, their favourite method of hunting and killing the snakes, an important source of food.

As we explored further my rancher friend pointed out 2 more buttes of some significance. On one, according to local lore, the last buffalo hunt in Canada took place. And at another, called Angel Butte, I was led to a stone lying flat in the grass with a crudely carved inscription, "1861, January 12, G. Lavallee." Nothing is known about the stone as to who placed it or the identity of "G. Lavallee." The name suggests a Metis freighter, but the true origin may never be known.



The Lookout

Dom Crawley