In Memoriam - James Murray Beck

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IN MEMORIAM

Noted author, political historian, academic and teacher James Murray Beck died last week. He was 96.

The Lunenburg native, who acted as constitutional adviser for the G. I. Smith government from 1967 to 1969, was a member of the Order of Canada, a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, a fellow of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society and received a host of other honours and accolades.

Beck was a radar mechanic and officer in Britain and on the continent for the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War. He was educated at Acadia University and the University of Toronto and, after teaching in the public school system, went on to teach at Acadia University, the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ont., and for 17 years in the political science department at Dalhousie University.

A retired Acadia political science professor paid tribute to Beck Monday evening.

"He was sort of the dean of political scientists," said Agar Adamson. "He was one of the founders of the discipline in Canada."

Adamson credits Beck with writing one of the key political science texts in Canada at the time. In fact, Beck wrote seven books and edited two others. Books penned by Beck include a two-volume biography of Joseph Howe.

Even in retirement Beck was prolific in pursuing his passion.

He did considerable research and writing about Lunenburg's history and development as well as compiling a study of provincial and federal elections in the area from 1758 to 1999. One of Adamson's former colleagues was taught by Beck at the Royal Military College and remembers Beck always peppered his lectures with anecdotes and references to his home province.

"He said, 'You always knew that Murray Beck was from Nova Scotia,' " said Adamson.