

## In Memoriam - Dr. Robert D. Crouse

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### IN MEMORIAM

Robert Darwin Crouse

On the night of Friday the 14th, in his 81st year, the Reverend Professor Robert Darwin Crouse died in his sleep in his childhood home in Crousetown, Lunenburg County, where his family has been established for more than 200 years. He had been very ill for several years but played the organ for the Liturgy at St Mary the Virgin, Crousetown, the Sunday before last. His contributions of the highest level to the Classics Department of Dalhousie University, to the University of King's College, and to their students, to international scholarship, to the Anglican Church of Canada, and to the musical life of Nova Scotia make his passing momentous. The Department of Classics has received condolences from many parts of Europe and North America.

Robert received his primary and secondary education in the village school in Crousetown and at King's Collegiate School in Windsor, which contributed much to his love of music and of learning. One writer at the Collegiate School judges him the most outstanding scholar it has graduated in its 223 year history. He arrived at Dalhousie - King's in 1947, the year James Doull began teaching in the Classics Department. Robert graduated in Classics in 1951 and then spent a year studying philosophy at Dalhousie and theology at King's. He organised at King's a "revolutionary cell" of the Society of the Catholic Commonwealth, devoted to bringing together Marxism and Anglo-Catholicism; members read Aquinas and Marx together. The authorities of the Anglican Diocese and King's were unable to decide which was the more subversive and established a body, labelled the "Inquisition" by the students, to root out the theological and politically erroneous. It continued its work into the 1960s.

When Robert decamped to Harvard to read Divinity, he moved into the Cambridge Oratory of the Society. He broke with it in 1953, although he continued to inspire students to read Das Kapital. He and the satirist Tom Lehrer were room mates at Harvard and from him he handed on the lyrics of "The Vatican Rag" and "God Bless Free Enterprise, System Divine." In the Harvard Divinity School, the great Harry Wolfson pushed him to add German to his Greek, Latin and French. Robert consolidated it with a year of study at Tubingen in 1955. By way of his work on Dante, and his years of teaching in Italy at the Ambrosianum and the Augustinianum, he acquired Italian. Harvard granted him an S.T.B. (cum lauda) in 1954. After he was ordained priest by the Bishop of Nova Scotia, Robert moved to Trinity College, Toronto, where he was a Tutor in Divinity for three years and earned a Master of Theology (1st class Honours) in 1957. Trinity awarded him an Honorary Doctor of Divinity in 1983.

Robert's full-time teaching career began with an appointment as Assistant Professor of Church

History and Patristics at Bishop's University. When he returned to Nova Scotia in 1963 to join the Classics Department of Dalhousie, several of his former students at Bishop's followed him; they have made significant contributions to the artistic and academic life of the province. At Dalhousie, together with James Doull, Robert played an essential role in creating a distinctive way of presenting Classics. Lovers of the ancient languages and masters of these and of philology, they subordinated them to bringing out the argument of texts so as to expose their logic, allowing it to persuade the attentive student. With both teachers question and silence were fundamental. Their vision of the scope of Classics-for Doull and Crouse it must include Hellenism's relation to the Middle Eastern cultures with which it united to form our actual historical realities-, and the priority they gave to the argument of ancient and mediaeval texts enabling them to speak to us now, have made the Department exceptionally successful both within Canada and internationally.

Together with Hilary Armstrong and Patrick Atherton, in 1977, Crouse and Doull founded a journal, *Dionysius*, which the Department continues to edit and which is an international leader in the study of the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions broadly understood. In 1981 Robert was a founder of St Peter Publications in Charlottetown and of the Atlantic Theological Conferences, both of which continue. For five decades Fr Crouse delivered uncounted theological and spiritual addresses, conferences, and retreats and guided the hundreds who came to him for help. The extent of his labours, which embraced North America and Europe, was suggested when the Diocese of Saskatchewan made him its Canon Theologian.

In 1970 Robert became a PhD of Harvard University. His dissertation was a critical edition of the *De Neocosmo* of Honorius Augustodunensis. He supervised scores of MA theses at Dalhousie and directed and examined dozens of doctoral dissertations there and throughout North America and Europe. His lectures, sermons, and scholarly publications (he published over seventy articles, reviews, and translations) were polished artefacts characterised by the greatest economy, precision, and beauty of language. He served as Chairman of the Department from 1971 to 1976 and was made full Professor in 1976. He retired as Emeritus Professor in 1996. In 1990 the *Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum* in Rome named him Visiting Professor of Patrology, a post he took up repeatedly until 2004; he was the first non-Roman Catholic to be given this distinction.

In 1972 he joined other members of Classics, as well as members of the Departments of German and Sociology, as the first co-ordinators responsible for the structure and lectures of the Foundation Year Programme at King's. His Section on the Middle Ages was a model of the integration of literary, philosophical, religious, social and artistic culture. With camera in hand he crisscrossed Europe bringing back the history of Romanesque and Gothic architecture. His lectures on architecture and music opened many students to hitherto hidden mysteries. His lectures on Dante's *Divine Comedy* were so loved that he continued them well after retirement, giving his last series in 2003. Former students returned annually to hear them. Suitably his last lectures in the university were delivered on the *Confessions* of St Augustine in 2004 in the Foundation Year Programme. At King's he was a Carnegie Professor from 1979 and Clerk of Convocation between 1972 and 1994, responsible both for the choice of honorary degree candidates and the conduct of the ceremony; he served as Vice-President for two years and Director of the Foundation Year Programme for one. King's awarded him an Honorary Doctor of Divinity in 2007. Outside the classroom his greatest contribution there was in the Chapel. His celebration of the liturgy and his sermons had enormous influence on the lives of students and faculty. Moreover, he established the choir for the Thursday Solemn Eucharist which is now the foundation of the musical renaissance at King's.

Robert's gifts as an organist and choirmaster, were extended not only to parishes (notably in his home parish of Petite Riviere, Holy Trinity, Bridgewater, and St James', Halifax) and chapels. Soon after he returned to Nova Scotia, he assisted in the rescue and restoration of an early 19th century tracker organ which became the centre of forty-seven years of Summer Baroque concerts at St Mary's Crousetown. While such concerts of early music have now become staples of our Summer fare in the Maritimes, Robert was a pioneer.

After the concerts, receptions at his house allowed musicians and their audiences to admire Robert's extraordinary gardens. He was always an organic gardener, and inspired many to imitate his practices; his salads provoked awe, and his rosary, with 129 varieties, delight. A superb cook, his hospitality to students, colleagues and all who visited seemed without limit. A King's President remarked that his table was a constant reiteration of the miracle of the feeding of the 3000. However, this home was also a sanctuary for mind and spirit. He eschewed radio, television, and telephone. Around the walls of the room where Robert spent most of his time, the same President carved, in Carolingian Latin, an inscription from Scripture. They are words St Bernard took from Isaiah for the habitations of his Cistercian monks and nuns who keep silence strictly, they translate thus: "The solitary place shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the lily ... and a highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness" (Isaiah 35.1-9). At the heart of all Robert's apparently endless practicality lay a carefully guarded silence which enabled the depth of his thought, his communion with God, nature, and humanity, and his unmovable independence of mind. Among his greatest gifts as a teacher was his communication of the necessity, goodness, and beauty of contemplative silence.

Later this term the Department of Classics will celebrate Robert's indelible contribution to its intellectual life with an academic act of remembrance. A portrait by an alumna, Andrea Striowski, matching the one she painted of James Doull, will be unveiled. Contributions to the cost of the portrait and to a memorial fund supporting guest lectures on Late Ancient and Mediaeval philosophy, religion, and literature in the department will be welcomed. They may be sent to Ben Mclsaac, External Relations, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, B3H 3J5 and should be marked for the Robert Crouse Memorial.

Robert's remains will be received at the University of King's College Chapel at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday the 18th. There vigil will be kept until the Requiem Mass at 2 p.m. on Wednesday. He will be interred from his beloved St Mary the Virgin Church in Crousetown, which he embellished exquisitely for fifty years, after a Funeral Mass at 1 p.m. at which the Rt Rev'd Michael Hawkins, Bishop of Saskatchewan, a former student, will preach.