

In memoriam - W. Morven Gentleman

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on behalf of

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To: DAL-ANNOUNCEMENT@LISTS.DAL.CA <DAL-ANNOUNCEMENT@LISTS.DAL.CA>

In memoriam - W. Morven Gentleman

July 6, 1942 - December 13, 2018

True to his name, Morven was a gentle man. He loved mathematics, computer science, his family and friends, his students, nature, history, word-play and problem solving of any kind.

He was born in Calgary, Alberta, the third of four children of Scottish parents who highly valued education. The family moved to Lethbridge, and he went to local schools where he excelled in science and mathematics. As a kid, he built model planes and developed a passion for aviation, winning an award as Canada's top Air Cadet while in high school. He had hoped to pursue aeronautical engineering in university, but the timing was poor as Canada's Avro Arrow aviation project had just been cancelled. Instead he chose to enter the Mathematical Physics program at McGill University in Montreal, graduating with a B.Sc in 1963, and going on to graduate studies at Princeton University on a Woodrow Wilson scholarship. He earned a Ph.D. in Mathematics under John Tukey in 1965, and his work with Gordon Sande on the Fast Fourier Transform was his first of many publications in the years following.

Upon graduation, he took up a position at Bell Labs in Murray Hill, New Jersey, then moved to England, where he worked at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) in Teddington with James Wilkinson, a prominent figure in the field of numerical analysis. After a year at NPL, he moved back to Canada to work as a faculty member at the University of Waterloo, joining the Applied Analysis and Computer Science department, plus, later, the Statistics department. He was the first director of the University of Waterloo Mathematics Faculty Computing Facility (MFCF), where he established the Software Development Group that served as an important training ground for many who subsequently worked in the Canadian computing industry.

In 1982, he moved to the National Research Council in Ottawa, joining the Institute for Information Technology, Software Engineering Laboratory, where he led a team developing the Harmony operating system. He also served as director of the Consortium for Graduate Studies in Software Engineering (ConGESE), and co-led, with Dr. Jacob Slonim, the establishment of a Consortium for Software Engineering Research (CSER) that included universities from across Canada. In 2000, Morven joined the Faculty of Computer Science at Dalhousie University as the director of the new Global Information Networking Institute (GINI), During this time he also served as a professor for Computer Science and taught a course in Industrial Engineering.

His deep understanding of software, ranging from his initial focus on mathematical and statistical computation and real-time systems, to then more generally on commercial applications, has consistently been recognized as a significant contribution to the field of Applied Computer Science. He retired in 2008, but continued interacting with students, one of his favourite activities, for many years.

Morven touched many lives over the years. He is survived by two extraordinary wives (from different eras), two beloved daughters, three amazing sisters, two wonderful grandchildren, two eccentric cats, a pond full of koi, a large extended family, all of whom loved him, and an extensive network of friends, students, and colleagues, who will miss him dearly. He was one of a kind.

A memorial gathering where we can share our favourite stories about Morven is being planned for spring, 2019. Morven loved his students, so, in lieu of flowers, please donate to the **Morven Gentleman Memorial Scholarship Fund**: <http://giving.dal.ca/gentleman> or 902-494-2071.