

OBITUARY/NÉCROLOGIE

Frank Harold Rigler 1928-1982



Frank Harold Rigler, Professor of Biology, past chairman and friend, died at the age of fifty-four on June 26, 1982, after a 5-yr battle with pancreatic cancer. His untimely death is an irreparable loss for his family and for us all.

Frank was born in London, England, in 1928. He grew up in Toronto, attended East York Collegiate, and then obtained his B.A. with 1st-class honours in Biology in 1950, his M.A. in 1952, and his Ph.D. in 1954, all from the University of Toronto. His Ph.D. studies were carried out principally at the Chalk River Nuclear Laboratories of the Atomic Energy Commission of Canada. Frank held a postdoctoral fellowship at the Laboratory of the Marine Biological Association in Plymouth, England, a unique and special place of which he often spoke and to which he returned as Visiting Professor in 1974-75 and again last year during the last fall and winter of his life. It was at the Plymouth Laboratory that he met Ann Barton-Polly, whom he married in 1957 in her home town of Bideford in Devonshire. The same year he returned to the University of Toronto as an assistant professor in the Department of Zoology. He was promoted to associate professor in

1962 and to professor in 1967. Always one to take on a new challenge, Frank accepted the chairmanship of the Department of Biology at McGill in 1976. It was to be a double challenge, leading and strengthening a large and diverse department and fighting a courageous personal battle against the inexorable ravages of cancer. He gave to his colleagues, students, and McGill a remarkable 5 years.

Frank Rigler excelled both as a researcher and a teacher. In both roles his new techniques and innovative ideas had a profound impact. He made significant contributions to the fields of nutrient loading of lakes, phosphorus dynamics, zooplankton feeding behavior, and energy flow in aquatic systems. His work on nutrient loading models is now fundamental to modern lake management and conservation. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to limnology, Frank was awarded the Fry Medal of the Canadian Society of Zoologists and the Rawson Award of the Rawson Academy. Even during the last months of his life Frank continued to work and write, completing two papers.

To know Frank was a privilege and a sometimes uncomfortable pleasure. His mind was as thoroughly logical and his approach as thoroughly scientific as they could be. His conversation, like his writing, was brilliant: clear, simple, direct, and free from trumpery. In discussion he had an uncanny ability to recover the thread of an argument which one had lost and to draw divergent opinions together into an appropriate conclusion. He had a tremendous breadth of knowledge and experience which seemed even larger because he could bring it to bear on problems at hand. He had small patience with "ecological claptrap" and little respect for personal sensitivities in the discussion of what is or should be science. Frank was extraordinarily competent, yet he was modest, self-critical, and open to discussion. He recognized his human limitations and he rather optimistically expected the same competence and humility from others. Frank set a high mark for us all. His life is a study in scientific dedication and we have all learned from it.

To his wife Ann, and his children Victor, Sarah, Eva, Adrienne, and Michael, we offer our heartfelt sympathy.

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