

Award for Service to the Profession of Geography

Dr S. Brian McCann

Dr. Brian McCann has a B.Sc. in geography and a B.Sc. in geology from the University of Wales. He obtained his Ph.D. in geomorphology from the University of Cambridge in England in 1961. Following seven years as Lecturer in the Department of Geography at the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth, Brian came to McMaster University in 1967. When he retired in July 1997, he had completed 30 years of service to geography in Canada.

It is clearly Brian's knowledge and love of coastlines that has been the primary motivation for his research activities. No other Canadian geographer can claim to have worked extensively on all three coasts of Canada, as well as on the shorelines of the Great Lakes.

In the late 1960s, Brian and his graduate students began pioneering studies of the effects of permafrost and ice push on Arctic beaches at Radstock Bay on Devon Island and at Resolute Bay on Cornwallis Island. Although he later returned to work on Ellesmere Island and at Frobisher Bay (Iqaluit) on Baffin Island, in the 1970's Brian turned his focus to the sand beaches, barrier islands and dunes of the Maritimes: Kouchibouguac Bay in New Brunswick, Hog Island and Malpeque Bay on PEI, the Magdalen Islands of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and Sable Island off Nova Scotia. He also supervised the work of a graduate student who studied the Quaternary history of the Burin Peninsula in Newfoundland. Overall he has made contributions to 11 books and has published approximately 60 refereed papers.

During his career, Brian supervised the work of seven Ph.D. students and 19 M.Sc. students. What is not readily apparent from his curriculum vitae, however, is that seven of his Master's students continued their studies at the Ph.D. level. It is also remarkable that eight of the students whom he supervised are now faculty members in Canadian universities; and an additional two students can be found teaching in universities in the UK and in Australia.

Because of his research knowledge, Brian was asked to undertake a range of scholarly activities. For example, for 10 years he was an Associate Editor of the Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences, and for 25 years he was a member of the Editorial Board of Applied Geography.

Brian contributed to the organization of at least three major conferences. In 1987, he was responsible for the CAG Annual Meeting held at McMaster, and in 1993 he was co-organizer of the very successful Third International Conference of Geomorphology, also held at McMaster. Approximately 700 participants attended this latter conference, which clearly established Canada as an important contributor in geomorphological research.

In spite of all his research activity, Brian undertook his share of administration at McMaster. For six years, he was Chair of Geography, a task he undertook with considerable commitment. Colleagues, and also those who were students during his tenure as Chair, speak very highly of his concern for them as individuals.

A dedicated teacher, able to inspire students from first year undergraduate to the graduate level, Brian is particularly effective in the field. For many years he ran a one week field course in Cape Cod which provided an important educational experience for many McMaster undergraduates.

A well-respected colleague who has made valuable contributions to our discipline in research, administration and teaching, Dr. S. Brian McCann is clearly worthy to receive the "CAG Award for Service to the Profession of Geography."