

## In Memoriam: Gordon W. Smith (1918 – 2000)

THE PASSING OF GORDON W. SMITH (B.A., M.A, Ph.D.) a little over a year ago represents a great loss to the scholarly community interested in the Arctic regions. For those who knew him, which was my privilege for some thirty-five years, Gordon will be remembered as a man of exceptional qualities, both as a person and as a scholar. Gordon was a profoundly good human being, with the greatest respect for others, even if he disagreed with their views. In expressing a different opinion, he usually prefaced his remarks by saying “I am not sure that I can completely agree with you” and would then go on to express his disagreement with such a choice of words (he had a mastery of the English language) and politeness that one practically regretted having expressed a different opinion.

As a scholar, Gordon began his contribution with his doctoral dissertation at Columbia University in 1952 on “The Historical and Legal Background of Canada’s Arctic Claims.” It is a masterpiece of research totalling some 496 pages with a thirty-page bibliography. For a period of about seventeen years following his doctoral degree, Gordon taught history (mainly British) in various universities and countries, but he maintained his interest in the Arctic during that time. Indeed, in 1966, he contributed to a collective work in the form of a sixty-page paper entitled “Sovereignty in the North: The Canadian Aspect of an International Problem.”<sup>1</sup> The thoroughness of research, which has always been the hallmark of Gordon’s work, is evidenced by the 270 footnotes. His conclusion that “Canada’s legal right to her northern territories, in

<sup>1</sup> See R. St. J. Macdonald, ed., *The Arctic Frontier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), at 194-255.

particular the islands, has been well established at least since the early 1930's"<sup>2</sup> has never been seriously challenged.

The year 1966 was far from representing the end of his research on the Arctic. With the crossing of the Northwest Passage by the ice-breaking oil tanker *U.S.S. Manhattan* in 1969, Gordon began work on a research project, which he continued on a full-time basis until his death in October 2000. When I say "full time," I mean an average of about ten hours a day, five days a week. During those thirty years, Gordon pursued his research in the files and libraries of the government departments concerned (Indian Affairs and Northern Development, National Defence, Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Transport), the National Archives, and the Law Library of the University of Ottawa. Unfortunately, he was such a perfectionist that he did not want to bring his research to a close — in spite of my urging on many occasions — until he had reached the objective he had set for himself. This objective was to study the historical and legal aspects of Canada's sovereignty claim over the lands and waters of the Arctic and to trace the developments of the applicable law of the sea up to the signing of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Gordon's dedication to scholarship was such that he did all of this research, except for a period of four years when he was under contract with the Canadian government (1969-1973), completely on his own. Having lived a very frugal life on a meagre pension, his relatives and friends firmly believe that they owed it to his memory to do their utmost to make the fruits of his labour available to the public. Hopefully, this determination will prove possible. In the meantime, the note which follows describes the scope and value of his work. Jeannette Tramhel, a long-time friend of Gordon's and his family as well as a lawyer of considerable experience in international law, kindly consented to prepare it.

May the memory of Gordon W. Smith be a motivation towards excellence for us all.

DONAT PHARAND  
*Board of Editors*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* at 254.