

# A Tribute to Patrick W. Colgan 1944-2004

IAN THOMPSON

Canadian Forest Service, 1219 Queen Street East, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 5M7 Canada;  
e-mail: Ian.Thompson@NRCan-RNCan.gc.ca

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Patrick Colgan and partner Marcia Sweet, at home in Burlington in 2001.

Patrick Colgan died on 21 July 2004 from the amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease) that had been diagnosed at the end of April 2003. Patrick was married to Valerie Salmond from 1966 to 1986. They had two sons, Andrew and Jeffery. After a career teaching at Queen's University in Kingston, Patrick accepted an administrative position with the Canadian Museum of Nature and he and his partner, Martha Sweet, moved to Ottawa. At the time of his death, Patrick was the director of research programs for Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG), in Hamilton and Burlington, Ontario. RBG had accorded him emeritus status during the latter period of his illness, in 2004. He is sadly missed by Marcia and family.

Patrick earned an Honours BA (with a major in animal psychology) in 1967 from the University of Toronto and a Master's degree in psychology from Harvard University. After receiving his PhD from Cornell University in 1971, he accepted a position as assistant professor in the Biology Department at Queen's University. From 1979-80, he was the "Royal Society Suffield Scholar", at Sussex University, England. In 1984, he

was promoted to Professor of Biology at Queen's University and served as Associate Head and Acting Head of the Department for several periods from 1987 through 1991. He also served as the Chair of Life Sciences, School of Graduate Studies from 1985-87. Patrick supervised 19 master's degree students, 7 doctoral dissertations, and 5 post-doctoral fellows, and served on the supervisory committees of more than 30 other graduate students.

Patrick was an expert in fish behaviour, focussing on aspects of motivation and proximate causation, and with his students, published many quantitative papers on the subject. Between 1975 and 1986, he wrote or co-edited four books on the quantitative study of animal behaviour. Patrick and his graduate students produced a remarkable number of publications, many of which continue to be cited (see following bibliography). He served as the editor of *Animal Behaviour* in 1982-1985, was President of the Animal Behaviour Society from 1989-90 and was elected a Fellow in 1991. Patrick was a voracious reader and he was in constant demand as a reviewer of books for journals and news-

papers because of the quality of his reviews. He was the book review editor for *Behavioural Processes* from 1993-1997 and for *Global Biodiversity* 1994-1997. As well, he was a frequent contributor of reviews to *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* in from 1981 to 2002 and the *Canadian Book Review Annual* from 1993 to 2004. He continued to do book reviews up until the week of his death.

Patrick left Queens to join the Canadian Museum of Nature 4 June 1991 after being individually recruited as Assistant Director Collections and Research. In a reorganization in 1994 he became Vice President for Science and Education. I think that perhaps Patrick felt that joining the museum was an opportunity to affect changes to national science policies, and certainly he had become interested in science management during the latter years of his tenure at Queen's. During this short period on the federal scene, he also served as a lecturer at the Canadian Centre for Management Development. While at the Canadian Museum of Nature, he instituted and led a Task Force on Canadian Biosystemics, authoring a major report on the state of systematics research and capacity in Canada in 1992. Unfortunately, not all the years at the Museum were the happiest for Patrick. He had to preside over downsizing of his staff in 1993 and then, ultimately, he too was caught in the net of continuing upheaval within the museum when his own position was terminated in April, effective 12 July 1997. Subsequently he wrote a moving essay on the affects of downsizing published in the *Globe and Mail* 19 September 1997 page A18. Facts and Arguments: After downsizing: letting go, moving on. When I lost my job, Canada lost another established scientist. But Marcia got a less challenging garden, a university got my science library, and the world has a new pair of B&B owners" which described his search for a new role and resettlement in warmer climate of the Niagara-on-the-Lake in southern Ontario as tourist accommodation entrepreneurs

Immediately following his departure from the museum, Patrick made an extraordinarily generous gift of 10 000 books from his immense personal library, many volumes of which were rare, to Algoma University College in Sault Ste. Marie, and of another 1000 books to University of Northern British Columbia. At the same time, he donated his massive collection of more than 300 000 reprints to Memorial University.

After three years of B&B and sessional lecturer in evolution at Brock University, in 2001 he became Director of Research and Natural Lands at Royal Botanical Gardens. Here, he supervised the herbarium, library, research and natural lands projects, researchers and ecological managers. Patrick was also responsible for the stewardship of approximately 1000 hectares of natural lands that are owned and managed by RBG and he represented the institution in collaborations, such as the Bay Area Restoration Council. In 2001,

Patrick explored a new relationship between RBG and indigenous peoples that resulted in a First Nations internship program in ethnobotany at RBG, supported by the Museum Assistance Program of the Government of Canada.

Patrick had a wonderful sense of humour, and enjoyed witticisms to no end. He sent the following memo to Queen's Financial Services Department that was printed in *Biology this Week* (the Queen's Biology Department newsletter): "For some time I have received some of my cheques from you made out to Patricia Colgan. Please be assured that this is an error, proof of which I should be happy to furnish if requested."

He was an avid chorister and spent many happy years singing with the Kingston Symphony Choral Society. Indeed, his curriculum vitae, submitted for promotion to Professor at Queen's University, contained two pages listing the choral works with which he had been involved during his time in Kingston. He continued his singing in Ottawa and again in Niagara/Hamilton, until his illness forced him to give up this joy in his life. Another Patrick passion was rare books, and many a graduate student was dragged in-tow into rare book stores across North America, while attending various conferences.

I can only imagine the frustration that such an illness brought to a man who was so extraordinarily full of energy. Patrick loved life. His enthusiasm for debate, knowledge, ideas, detailed thinking, books, mathematics, singing, sports, and family were contagious for those of us who were blessed enough to know him well. When I met Patrick, he was the consummate academic, brimming with ideas and revelling in constant questioning.

My personal involvement with Patrick began in 1981, when I asked Queen's University Biology Department to consider taking a mature student (some would have argued differently!) on an educational leave from the federal government to do a doctorate. There was apparently disagreement at the school over the issue, as this kind of arrangement had not previously been done. But, Patrick, ever respectful of motivated people and new ideas, simply asked "why not?", and stated emphatically that he would gladly step up as supervisor. And so, an unlikely alliance began between a forest wildlife ecologist and a fish behaviourist, and I found myself in a lab surrounded by fish folks. Patrick was a wonderful supervisor and participated fully with his students, academically in the lab, athletically at the rink and on the squash courts, and socially at the "Grad Club" or at various dinners at his home. A beer at the Grad Club after playing a hockey game was not an afternoon wasted to him. Aside from the alacrity and probity of the man, what probably struck me most about Patrick was that he never used what he knew was a superior intellect to demean others. Patrick became one of two people who were

highly influential in my professional life, as I know he also was for many other students who were fortunate enough to pass through his lab. He was, without a doubt, the most erudite person that I have ever met and all of us students benefitted immensely from his guidance, passion, and knowledge. The legacy of Patrick Colgan is a large number of well-established, well-recognized researchers doing important work across this country and abroad. I shall always remember his daily slogan: "onwards and upwards!" and I shall miss it.

### Acknowledgments

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