

Dr. John Alexander MacPherson, GCLJ



John Alexander MacPherson was born in Windsor, Ontario, June 1, 1931, the eldest son of Hugh L. MacPherson and Lenore Pratt. His father was a columnist and literary editor at the Windsor Star, a native of Cloverville, Antigonish County, and a graduate of St. Francis Xavier University. His great uncle was the Rev. Dr. H.A. MacPherson, President of St. Francis Xavier University from 1906 to 1936.

On his mother's side, John was an 8th generation Canadian, descended from Jean Duprat who arrived in Canada in the late 1600's settling in Trois Rivieres, Quebec. A grandson, Francois Prat made his way to the area of Windsor, Ontario in the mid 1700's and was among the first families to settle in that region.

John obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Western Ontario (1953), a Master of Arts from the University of Windsor (1955) and a Doctorate in Philosophy in English cum laude from the University of Ottawa (1967). John began his teaching career at Xavier College, Sydney (1955-61), and then enjoyed a long association with St. Francis Xavier University as an Associate Professor (1961), and then as a full Professor in the Department of English (1968) until his retirement in 1995. He specialized in Shakespeare and Renaissance literature.

John served as University Ceremonial Officer from 1965 until 1995, and was instrumental in establishing a more formal ceremony for the feast day of St Francis Xavier and the formalization of the X-Ring ceremony. He received an honorary X-Ring, voted on by students, in 1994.

As a long time Faculty Advisor to the StFX Student Council, John acted as a mentor to many students. Several of them became lifelong friends whose messages and visits he appreciated, particularly as his health declined in later years.

Outside of the University, he took a very active part in civic and cultural affairs, notably with the Dominion Drama Festival, the Canadian Red Cross, Nova Scotia Division, and World University Service, to mention only a very few. He had a particular interest in gerontology - writing, lecturing and contributing volunteer services to many charitable organizations devoted to this discipline.

A devoted Roman Catholic, John was admitted to the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta as a Knight of Magistral Grace in October 1973, becoming a Knight of Grace and Devotion in 1976 and a Knight in Obedience in 1982. He became a Novice Knight of Justice in 1992 and professed his simple vows in 1993. John became a professed Knight of solemn vows in 1996 and was promoted to the rank of Grand Cross of Justice in 2001. In June 2004, he was promoted a Bailiff Grand Cross of Justice and, in 2009, he was awarded the Order's Grand Cross Pro Pio Melitensi.

John was elected President of the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta in 1988 and served until 1992. During that year, he hosted the visit to Canada of H.M.E.H. Fra' Andrew Bertie, 78th Prince and Grand Master of the Order, along with his retinue. From 1994 to 2009, he was a member of the Sovereign Council, the governing body of the Order, and from 2001 to 2010, he was President of the Committee for the protection of names and emblems of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

During his long and distinguished service to the Church and to the Order, John was awarded several high distinctions, chief of which were Gentleman of His Holiness (1991), Grand Officer of the papal Order of Saint Gregory the Great, and a Cross of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre which had

awarded him its Cross of Merit. He was also a Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of Italy and a Grand Officer of the Order of Civil Merit of Spain. He served on the Supreme Council of the Sacred and Military Constantinian Order of St. George.

John retired to Halifax where he died on September 19, 2017. He is survived by his brother, Neil MacPherson of Montreal, his sister Helen (Gordon) Wainman of London, Ontario and a niece Megan (Kerry Ambrose) Wainman of Toronto.

Honours

- 1977 Grand Cross Order of Saint Lazarus Canada
- 1995 Registration of Arms, Canadian Heraldic Authority, Ottawa
- Grand Officer of the Order of Saint Gregory the Great
- Cross of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre
- Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of Italy
- Grand Officer of the Order of Civil Merit of Spain