

Tribute to Professor Emeritus Lars Henry Thompson

February 3, 1933- April 1, 2025



Lynn and Lars photo courtesy Lynn Nolan

We, at the Rideau Trail Association recently lost a long-time friend and member who was known to many of us for his superb organizational skills and his impeccable command of the English language. *"I have received many tributes to [Lars] from Rideau Trail members. Lars was an enthusiastic tennis player and hockey player and seldom a hiker but he gravitated to all my RT friends and gradually involved himself in what he could do best, and that was organization. He loved everything about the RTA."* Lynn Nolan

Lars Thompson was born in Wembley (London) England. In 1939 he came to Canada with his parents, and his sister. At the University of Toronto, Victoria College, Lars majored in philosophy and was a Gold Medalist. Lars also completed an MA in English at the University of Rochester, NY. In 1968 with his wife Ruth and 6 children, he moved to Kingston, where he taught English at Queen's University Faculty of Education. In 1981 Lars taught in Shandong China for a year. Returning to Kingston in 1982 he was joined by Lynn Nolan, his companion for 42 years.

Lars served 19 years on the Frontenac County Board of Education and served as Chairman of the Board for one year. Lars also served on the Board of Kingston Literacy 1994-2011 (President 1995-2001), creating a variety of teaching materials with his editor Becci Hayes.

Lars loved sports especially the Toronto Blue Jays. He was a mid-life hockey player with Queen's Faculty Flyers and played an abundance of tennis at the Kingston Tennis Club. With the Rideau Trail Association- Kingston Club which Lars and Lynn joined in 1983, he served in many capacities. Lars' sense of humour was pivotal to his life. He loved all forms of entertainment from the Simpson's to Shakespeare and he found humour sustained him to the end. Play on words were one of his favourite types of humour, he said it helped hone his Scrabble skills.

Although Lars was never an active hiker, since he was too busy playing weekend tennis, Lars was a very competent organizer having spent decades as a Queen's Prof. organizing English Teacher's conferences. It was these skills which Lars brought with him to the RTA.

When the Kingston RTA found itself without someone willing to organize our end of January weekend ski trip to Quebec Lars stepped in and organized it for 12 or more years starting January 2001. When our RTA Kingston Club could not find someone to organize the weekly hikes and excursions Lars stepped in and was Outings Coordinator for two years.

Lars and Lynn were co-editors of the RTA Newsletter for six years, beginning 1997. When the late Robert Groves was forced to step aside as RTA President due to health issues, Lars graciously filled the role of RTA President for 2016-2017.

Lars had a long, complete and varied life and said he would die happy and contented, ever so thankful for all his family and friends, and those others one meets in a long, eventful life. He was thankful for the excellent medical care he received at KGH, Hotel Dieu, Providence Care and Providence Transitional Care, as well as from PSWs, therapists, and nurses who provided home care.

And, a final note about Lars' reaching out to new members: *"I joined the RTA club in 2019 not long before the Kingston AGM was scheduled. Lars called me because I was a new member and invited me to come to the AGM. He gave a spiel about the club executive and I recall saying I only just joined, so I didn't want to get involved with the executive. I wasn't even sure I'd go to the AGM.*

Lars then mentioned the Member at Large position that wasn't a big commitment. I only had to come to the meetings and listen in, he said. I figured I could handle that, so at the AGM, I put my hand up to volunteer to be a Member at Large. Not long after, I took over the role of Wednesday Walk Coordinator, but if not for Lars, I may not have volunteered in the first place." Jennifer Brinkman

A Celebration of Life will be held at Queen's University club, Stuart Street Kingston July 12 at 2 pm.
Submitted by William Ottney with thanks to Lynn Nolan, Linda Line, Stan Huff, and Jennifer Brinkman