

Thomas (Tom) William Douglas Lifetime Member of OCEA

- *Marie Gabriel interviewed Tom in January 2001 for an article in the OCEA News called "Early Days of OCEA"*

Tom Douglas is almost 81 years young, and has a large happy laugh when he talks about his teaching career. Tom met with me in the living room of his retirement home in Kitchener.

Tom tells me: "It is a matter of pride that I consider that Jack Ulan and I got the idea of starting an organization to promote Cooperative Education in Ontario, little thinking that the idea would spread and grow as it has."

Tom decided to be a teacher in about 1947. He had worked for 10 years in the skilled trade of pattern maker. In 1949, Tom accepted a position at Kitchener Collegiate Institute and within 3 years he was promoted to the position of Tech Director.



At this time (1953) Tom began to consider the benefits of providing practical experience for the students in the shops. Tom thought about a schedule of alternating one week in school, and one week in the industry during the last year of school.

Tom talked with others in the school and found support for the idea in the other Tech classes and in some of the Business classes. The principal agreed to try this idea.

Tom Douglas, Jack Ulan and the principals from their schools went to Dayton, Ohio to talk with teachers who had implemented this type of program - named Co-op. They gathered information on how to make the program work in Canada.

When he returned to Kitchener, Tom and his principal decided to pilot the program. They decided it would be for the students who wanted it (and not for all). This meant that Tom had to interview students to determine their interest, their commitment and their plans for post high school. The selected students would be in a class called "Co-op". It was very successful and Tom was very proud of his first attempt.

Tom went to other schools in Kitchener and Guelph to talk with other teachers about his idea. Only the Tech and Business teachers were interested. As the program expanded, some procedures were developed to meet the needs of the students and the community. There was no recognition from the Department of Education and there no guidelines or policy documents to provide consistency.

Tom was asked to spend some time researching the local community about the opportunities for the students. He was given one year to complete this report. He made a survey form and went out to businesses and industries in the Cambridge (Hespeler) Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph area. He asked about their interest in the "Co-op" program and their needs/requirements from

the school. Tom provided the information to the schools in the area, and schools began to talk about the need for more involvement from the schools.

Students needed a course about work - today it is known as 'Pre-Placement'. One teacher spent some time with the students and told them about the work world, and what behaviour was expected. During the related subject class, the subject teacher provided specific details about the skills and knowledge that would be needed for the Co-op time. (Integration)

Tom and others believed that it was very important to give students a link with the in-school and the job. This practical link would give them an insight into industry. It would also help them to decide if they were in the right courses at school. If they had made a wrong choice, they could change their minds.

Many students were not hired while in school. Employers wanted the students to complete high school before they hired the students. If the employer could not hire the student, they gave them references to other employers who wanted to hire new people.

The students were marked while they were at the job. The employer would mark them with Exceptional, Very Good, Good and Fair. The marking sheet was signed by the employer and returned to the school by mail.

The principals gave permission for the teacher in Co-op to leave the school and go to the industry to visit the student. The teacher would visit once a month and had about 8 - 10 students to visit. This was a special privilege to have the permission to leave the school during school hours. The teacher would report to their principal before leaving the school and report again when returning. The Co-op teacher had the same students until they graduated or were hired. The Co-op teacher was given money to supply gas for their car.

In the early 1970's, Tom went to conferences and told others about his success in the Kitchener area. Tom and Jack Ulan started to think about an organization that would allow teachers to share their ideas about Co-op with each other. The idea about an organization spread very fast and grew very quickly within the first 3 - 5 years. Soon the news was across Ontario - and this was before the fax and e-mail systems. Tom remembers attending some of the first meetings for OCEA, and spoke of his friendship with Jack Ulan.

Tom wanted to remind all of us that the heart of Co-op was the ability to link with business and commerce. The first teachers who were excited about this linkage were the Tech teachers and the Business teachers. Tom believes that today the academic teachers have their heart in it, but the Tech and Business teachers remain passionate about it.

Tom has attended many OCEA conferences, but indicated that his last conference was the 20th anniversary celebration in Hamilton, and he only stayed for one day.

It was a pleasure to talk with Tom and to learn about the early days of Co-op. We have maintained many of the original ideas about this program. Tom was happy to hear that OCEA has over 700 members and that over 70,000 students are in the Co-op program each year.

Tom was proud to be able to tell the story of his start in Co-op. He spends his winters in Florida, his summers at a cottage in Staynor, and the rest of the time at the sunny apartment in the retirement centre.

DOUGLAS, Thomas (Tom) William:

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Thomas (Tom) William Douglas on Friday, December 22, 2007 at 1:00 p.m, at Winston Park, Kitchener, Ontario. Tom was 88 years young.

Tom was a lifetime member of the Ontario Co-operative Education Association (OCEA). For so many of us, this is the first time we will have heard of Tom but what a legacy he has left to education and cooperative education in particular!

Tom and Jack Ulan first introduced an early version of cooperative education to the Waterloo County High Schools back in the 1950's. Tom continued to refine and develop his concepts until he developed what we fondly know of as '*pre-placement*' today. In the early 1970's Tom and Jack conceived the idea of an organization for cooperative education teachers; this organization was the Ontario Co-operative Education Association (OCEA). Today we are at least 1000 members strong.



We have lost someone who has truly made a difference in the lives of thousands of people from all walks of life. OCEA extends most sincere condolences to Tom's family.

You may write your memories of Tom on-line at www.mem.com and share them with us by emailing to OCEA@rogers.com as well.

For further information you can read Tom's obituary online at: <http://news.therecord.com/Obituaries/article/286879> or see attachment to view an article that was published in the OCEA News in January 2001 about the "early days of OCEA" and Tom Douglas.

Sincerely,
Tina Cotrupi
OCEA President 2007-2008

<http://news.therecord.com/Obituaries/article/286879>

DOUGLAS, Thomas William - A very decent and caring man died this week, Friday, December 22, at 1 p.m, at Winston Park. He was 88, and each year of his life was, and still is, intimately connected to the others who loved him deeply. And what a group it is!

His sister, Joyce Fraser and brother, Alvin watched Tom grow into the handsome young man who would later marry Velma, a beautiful woman who espied him in the church choir. Such is love! She, his closest and truest companion for 64 years, loved those knowing smiles and humour a husband shares with a wife. Their love gave life to four children, Tom, the patriarch of our family now, Robert, the teacher like his dad, David, the artist and skilled businessman and Susan, the compassionate and loving office manager at Forest Heights Collegiate. His love, like a river, flowed as each of these children married, Robert to Elaine, David to Vicky, and Susan to Mark. As Dad had hoped, that love brought him grandchildren, Warren, Corinne, Colin, Craig, Matthew, Laura, Amy, Erin, and James. What he is can be found in their eyes, as grandchildren married, Corinne to Jock, Colin to Melissa, and Craig to Julie. Tom's story

continues through the smiles and laughter of his great-grandchildren, Courtney, Haley, Evan, and Alicia. They are sweet.

Tom's life was lived with his community, in his 33 years as a teacher at KCI, as Technical Director; in his creation of Cooperative Education in Waterloo County High Schools, and in his long commitment to Trinity United Church, with his special friends in the church choir, as a tenor, and in the Mr. And Mrs. Club and in the Couples' Club, who will remember his laughter and storytelling antics well.

His heart-home is in Haliburton, in the cottage he crafted with his wife Velma, cut from the tall white pines surrounding the lot. His love for his family is visible in every meticulously created cabinet, in every pine table he made with his strong hands, and in every specially selected stone of the granite fireplace. It is a place of love.

He touched the lives of those he lived with at Winston Park in the last years of his life, with his gentleness. The staff helped us travel with Tom over the last few days while he was dying. Their caring and compassion, in the unexpected food they brought to us, in the nursing staff who listened to us tell stories about Tom and who turned him in bed with kindness, these simple gifts of their time and efforts sustained us.

We were there when Tom died. The Alzheimers that had imprisoned him for eight years released him just before he died, and he passed in a wonderful moment of genuine peace, into God's hands.

We have wonderful stories to tell about Tom's life. As a family we are at Westmount Funeral Chapel, 1001 Ottawa St. S., Kitchener, for visitation Thursday, December 27, from 2-4 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. Tom's funeral occurs Friday, December 28, at 11 a.m., at Trinity United Church, 74 Frederick Street, Kitchener. Parking is available at the Duke Street Parking Lot. A Handicap drop off is available at the front of the church. Cremation follows at a later date.

Donations to the Alzheimers Society of K-W or Trinity United Church would be appreciated, and can be arranged by contacting the funeral home at 519-743-8900.

You may also write your memories of Tom on-line at www.mem.com.

We can share tales of his life, for there, in the stories, is Tom. Bring that joy. He would love that.