

## OBITUARIES / DÉCÈS

### RICHARD ARTHUR PRESTON

Not many people can claim to have done more for their field than Professor Richard Arthur Preston has done for his. Historians of military, Commonwealth, and Canadian history owe Preston, who passed away in November 2006, a great debt.

His list of personal achievements would be the envy of any scholar. Born in Middlesborough, England, Preston graduated B.A. and M.A. from Leeds University before completing his Doctorate at Yale University in 1936. In 1940, he unselfishly put aside his academic career and volunteered for the Royal Air Force, splitting his wartime service between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar. At war's end, Preston emigrated to Canada, where he taught history for a time at the University of Toronto, before settling into a professorship of history at the Royal Military College of Canada in 1949. From RMC, he emigrated again, this time to the United States, to accept an appointment as W. K. Boyd Professor of History in the British Commonwealth Studies program at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. There he laid the foundation for its Centre of Canadian Studies, one of the first of its kind in the US. In 1971, he organized, then was first President of, the Association of Canadian Studies in the United States (ACSUS).

More than a record of accomplishments, Richard Preston leaves behind a legacy. His former students at the Royal Military College include Jack Granatstein, Desmond Morton, and General John de Chastelain – two deans of Canadian history and a Chief of the Defence Staff. At Duke, he mentored the likes of Stephen Harris and Roger Sarty, distinguished military historians both. That they, and many other Canadians, went to North Carolina to study Canadian history speaks volumes for Preston's contribution to the study of Canada in the United States. Plenty of American students joined them. More than a dozen Preston books on Imperial defence, Canada-US relations, and military history also endure. *Men in Arms*, the history of war and Western society that he co-authored with Sydney Wise and Alex Roland, still finds a place in military history courses today, some four decades after the publication of the first edition. Preston has definitely left his mark.

We should all do so much.

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