

Professor Emeritus Eric L Adler

December 10, 1930 - November 6, 2017



I have the sad duty to inform the department that Professor Emeritus Eric Adler passed away on November 6th in Victoria, BC. Erik was born in Alexandria, Egypt. He had originally planned to study chemical engineering in London, but as a member of the Jewish community he was stateless, and in 1948, the day he finished writing his London Matriculation exams, he was arrested and remained in prison until 1950 when he was acquitted. He finally made it to London in November 1950, too late to enrol in the chemical engineering degree program to which he had been accepted. He wrote a letter to his father stating that he was wavering somewhat because of his love of mathematics and physics. His father replied "become an engineer" which Eric considered the best advice he ever acquired. In 1955 he completed his degree in Electrical Engineering at Battersea College (now University of London), and began research at IT & T. Wanting to continue his education at the postgraduate level but unable to obtain financial support because of his statelessness, he sought a new homeland. Canada welcomed engineers and provided airfare.

The University of Toronto's offer of a job as a demonstrator enabled him to complete a Masters in Applied Science in 1959. During his time in Toronto he made friends with Peter Peet Silvester who remained a friend and colleague. In 1958 Dr. G.L. (John) d'Ombra, the chairman of Electrical Engineering at Battersea College during Eric's undergraduate years, became chairman of Electrical Engineering at McGill. He invited Eric to McGill University, his lifelong anchor. Gerald W. Farnell (PhD 1957) became Eric's doctoral supervisor. In 1961 Eric obtained Canadian citizenship, a Canadian passport, and a wife, Leonda (Lee). Eric started teaching the Electrical Engineering program at McGill and in 1966 completed his PhD. In collaboration with Gerry Farnell he undertook pioneering research into surface acoustic wave (or SAW) filters. These devices emerged as key components for the rapidly developing telecommunications field, and before the advent of digital transmission every television set contained a SAW filter. Eric developed a computer program which became the industry standard for SAW filter designers. During these years Eric also greatly enjoyed his collaboration with fellow professors Pierre Belanger and Nick Rumin on an undergraduate textbook, Introduction to Circuits with Electronics. He was elected a Fellow of the IEEE in 1989 and appointed Distinguished Lecturer by its Ultrasonics Society in 1994. He also served the Faculty of Engineering as Associate Dean (Academic) from 1977 to 1985 and made key contributions to curriculum development and making the Engineering Faculty more welcoming for women students. Eric retired from McGill in 1995 and was granted Professor Emeritus in 1998.

In Victoria Eric enjoyed his time with Literacy Victoria, Engineering Associates at U Vic, playing bridge and wide access to music. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Lee, and also to his sister Evelyn Moore and to his nieces, many grandnieces, grandnephews, cousins and friends. He will long be remembered at McGill for his sense of teamwork, clarity and consideration