

In Memoriam

Victor W. Marshall

April 11, 1944 – August 18, 2018



*Some lives are so vivid, it is difficult to imagine them ended.
Some voices so vibrant and distinctive, it is hard to think of them stilled.
A man who seldom rested is laid to rest and his absence is tangible,
like the silence after a mighty roar.¹*

These words, spoken at the funeral of U.S. Senator John McCain in September 2018, are particularly apt in describing Victor W. Marshall and what his life and career have meant for gerontology in Canada and internationally, and for the Canadian Association on Gerontology. He lived an extraordinarily vivid life as a founding member of the Canadian Association on Gerontology and as a pioneer of social gerontology. His voice has been especially vibrant and distinctive as one of CAG's and gerontology's most committed and passionate advocates. His presence has long been a reliable constant for CAG with his extraordinary unbroken record of attendance at every single CAG annual scientific meeting, from the founding conference in 1971 through 2016. When illness prevented his participation in 2017, he generously provided videotaped reflections of CAG's founding and history, in anticipation of its 50th anniversary.

This record is its own extraordinary testament to Victor's commitment and professional "giving" to Canadian social gerontology – and especially so for a colleague who lived in the United States for the past 20 years.

Born in Calgary, and with a Ph.D. in sociology from Princeton University, Victor Marshall had a rich academic career extending over 40 years, from his first academic appointment in the Department of Sociology at McMaster University in 1970; his move to the Department of Behavioural Science² at the University of Toronto in 1981; to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1999; to his retirement in 2013. Victor's career-long dedication to social gerontology and the sociology of aging – reflected in his active participation on CAG's executive committees and as an editor-in-chief of the *Canadian Journal on Aging*, and in his legacy of mentorship – have been recognized by numerous CAG awards: the Distinguished Member Award, CAG's highest honour (1998); the Evelyn Shapiro Award for Excellence in Student Mentoring (2008); the Contributions to Gerontology Award (2016); and the Honourary Member Award (2017).

Here we highlight three aspects of Victor Marshall's legacy: his influential research and scholarship, his pioneering leadership, and his exceptional mentoring and community-building.

Influential Research and Scholarship

Victor Marshall was an influential scholar. His record of 14 books, 79 refereed articles, and 92 invited book chapters reflect the range of his impact on the sociology of aging and in social gerontology. Some publications, including seminal volumes such as *Aging in Canada: Social Perspectives* (1980), literally defined the field of aging scholarship in Canada.

His research both advanced knowledge and broadly transformed understanding of diverse issues in aging from his earliest writing (*Last Chapters: The Sociology of Aging and Dying* [1980] – ground-breaking in advancing the understanding of the end-of-life in later life) – to his 2016 chapter on "The Interpretive Perspective on Aging" in the influential *Handbook of Theories of Aging* (3rd ed.).

A sociologist of aging, Victor Marshall had an extensive research program on a range of issues: social interactionist perspectives on aging, family life in old age, structural changes in work and their consequences for workers over the life course, work and retirement, international comparisons of workforce aging in the information technology sector, the global impact of workforce aging on social and health outcomes, and well-being in later life. Victor was widely regarded as a theorist, with his numerous books, chapters, and journal articles focused on social theory in reference to aging and the life course.

The prominent U.S. researcher John Riley identified Victor Marshall as one of the top four international scholars writing about the social psychology of aging and dying, noting in particular how Victor advanced understanding of such concepts as the legitimation of biography, awareness of finitude, and the life review as a social process.

Pioneering Leadership

The stamp of Victor Marshall's influence is *everywhere* in Canadian gerontology: through the courses and programmes he established and partnerships he developed, especially at the University of Toronto, and his pivotal role as the inaugural social sciences section editor, and then second editor-in-chief, of the *Canadian Journal on Aging/La revue canadienne du vieillissement*.

Victor also played a leadership role as director of the University of Toronto's Centre for Studies of Aging/Institute for Human Development, Life Course and Aging (1990–1998). He helped to build and sustain a vibrant community of people studying aging, from across the large UofT campus, to include colleagues from such disciplines as community health, geriatrics, nursing, psychology, social work, sociology, and rehabilitation sciences. His skill in building community also extended nationally, in his role as the founding research leader for CARNET: the Canadian Aging Research Network (1991–1995), the first Network of Centres of Excellence to be led by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. CARNET quite literally transformed the landscape of social science research, and research on aging, in Canada. It represented a new way of doing research – partnered; collaborative; and involving researchers from disciplines affiliated with all three federal funding councils (from social sciences and humanities to medical/health research to natural sciences and engineering – an unprecedented achievement at that time). CARNET was the first social science research program on such a national scale. Through his leadership of CARNET, Victor supported an entire cadre of scholars (of all

career stages) in innovative and trans-disciplinary approaches to gerontological research in Canada.

Victor Marshall's leadership has been acknowledged in his receipt of both the Queen Elizabeth II Golden (2002) and Diamond (2012) Jubilee medals, the first awarded by the CAG, and the second by General (and Senator) Romeo Dallaire. This latter award honoured Victor's commendable service outside academia, through his 13 years as the chair of the Gerontological Advisory Committee for Veteran's Affairs Canada.

Victor Marshall was also a leader on the international stage. His contributions on behalf of the Institute of Aging at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in his role as director (1999–2009) are well-known. He received the Gordon Streib Distinguished Academic Gerontologist Award from the (U.S.) Southern Gerontological Society in 2003.

But he also made important contributions to sociological and gerontological organizations worldwide: as a founding member and Executive Committee member of the Research Committee on Aging of the International Sociological Association; on the Executive Committee of the International Association on Gerontology; with the Gerontological Society of America and the American Sociological Association. He served on international editorial boards for *Social Forces*, *Journals of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, and *Journal of Aging and Health* and on the International Advisory Committee of the LIVES project on Vulnerability and the Life Course at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. Victor was a research fellow of the Boston College Sloan Center for Aging and Work.

Victor was also quite active in public service related to the concerns of older people, serving in advisory capacities for such organizations as Connecting Seniors of Canada, the Panel on Health Goals for Ontario, the Canada Pension Plan Advisory Board, and the North Carolina Advisory Council on Aging. In sum, Victor Marshall cared deeply and passionately about – and worked assiduously to advance – health, well-being, and quality of life for all people in later life.

Excellence in Mentoring and Community-Building

Victor Marshall shaped gerontology in Canada and the United States through his mentoring and his vision in the creation of educational programmes in aging. At McMaster University in 1972, he created one of the first "Age-related Studies" (later, Sociology of Aging) courses in Canada.

Victor's guidance of 26 PhD and 27 master's students to completion is an exceptional record. For more than

40 years he was one of gerontology's most dedicated and enthusiastic mentors, supervising students in sociology, community health and education, and in both Canada and the United States. His outstanding mentorship is recognized by mentor awards not only from the CAG, but also from the (U.S.) Gerontological Society of America (2002). No one else holds these awards from both national gerontological organizations in North America. This fact itself speaks to the unique scope of Victor Marshall's contributions, and his stature as a "gold standard" mentor. In 2015, when the (U.S.) Southern Gerontological Society inducted him into the GRITS (Gerontologists Rooted in the South) Hall of Fame, the organization specifically commended Victor Marshall as a "role model for future generations interested in the advancement of knowledge and practice in the field of aging" (<https://southerngerontologicalsociety.org/grits-victor-marshall.html>).

Two of the authors of this tribute count ourselves among those of Victor's graduate students whose lives and professional careers were profoundly changed and inspired by him. A key attribute of Victor's mentoring was its generosity. He was extraordinarily generous with his time and knowledge, as is perhaps true of all great mentors. But he was also extremely generous in promoting his students' work, referencing their research, developing their professional networks, and enhancing their opportunities for success. He is known to have sacrificed his own co-authorship on more than one prominent publication, in order to enable his students to have some single-authored journal publications.

Victor Marshall was also generous and inclusive in bringing others into the gerontological community. Several prominent scholars in Canada and the United States credit Victor with introducing them to researchers in social gerontology and to the Canadian Association on Gerontology. As a result, they were able to contribute to gerontology in ways that they never would have done "if he had not been there".

Victor Marshall: A Life and a Legacy

Victor Marshall's contributions to gerontology and his legacy of leadership and achievement were enabled and enhanced by his prodigious work ethic (some would call him a workaholic), and his dedicated commitment in all that he did. He did not shy away from confrontation when the issues at stake were important to him. He was passionate about whatever he was involved in, whether drafting CAG bylaws to be inclusive of student representation, conducting rigorous research, or serving Canada's veterans through the Gerontological Advisory Committee.

He had a keen wit, a sense of humour, and a fine appreciation of single-malt scotch. Victor was also extraordinarily proud of the academic accomplishments of his wife, Joanne Gard Marshall, and their daughter Emily Marshall. With Joanne's expertise in health sciences librarianship, they collaborated over several decades on research grants and publications. Indeed, Joanne was lead author on Victor's very first publication, on the treatment of death in children's books, in the journal *Omega* in 1971. Victor was delighted when Joanne's appointment as dean of the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill brought them to the United States in 1999, and he then became director of the UNC Institute on Aging.

In accepting the CAG Honourary Member award on her father's behalf in 2017, Emily, now an associate professor in family medicine at Dalhousie University, spoke of how she grew up knowing her family to include not only her parents, but also many of Victor's students and colleagues as members of her "gerontological family". Victor and Joanne were generous hosts to legions of early career and established gerontologists, functioning as a hub for the creation of gerontological communities in both Canada and the United States, and enhancing networks of scholars from around the world. Victor was never happier than when his professional and family lives were visibly intertwined: the CAG Annual Conference in Halifax in October 2013 brought a very special source of pride for him when all three Marshall family members – Victor, Joanne, and Emily – were presenters of scientific papers!

Victor Marshall's legacy as a scholar, mentor, and leader in his profession is without parallel in Canada. His career is inextricably entwined with and inseparable from the history of Canadian gerontology. Those of us who have been touched by his scholarship, by his leadership in gerontology, and by his committed mentorship will miss him greatly. No CAG conference (or annual business meeting) will be quite the same without Victor's engaged presence and vocal advocacy. As we celebrate the life and mourn the loss of a valued colleague and a very dear friend, we are comforted in the knowledge that the legacy of Victor Marshall's influence and impact will long endure.

Anne Martin-Matthews
Blossom Wigdor
François Béland
Carolyn Rosenthal³

Notes

- 1 From eulogy by former U.S. President G. W. Bush, for U.S. Senator John McCain, Washington, D.C., September 1, 2018.

- 2 Renamed, Dept. of Public Health Sciences, 1998, and Dalla Lana School of Public Health, 2008.
- 3 The authors of this tribute are all former editors-in-chief of the *CJA/RCV*, and have each known and worked with Victor Marshall for at least 40 years: Blossom Wigdor was the inaugural editor-in-chief of the journal, an early collaborator, and close colleague of Victor's at the University of Toronto; François Béland, the journal's third editor-in-chief, succeeded Victor in that role, and credits Victor with

introducing him to Canadian gerontology and to colleagues in the Canadian Association on Gerontology; Anne Martin-Matthews, the journal's fourth editor-in-chief, was Victor's first PhD student (McMaster University, 1980), and a longtime colleague, friend, and collaborator; and Carolyn Rosenthal, Victor's third PhD student, collaborator on GRASP (Generational Relations and Succession Project) and co-author with Victor on many publications, was the fifth editor-in-chief of the *CJA/RCV*.