

Professor Richard W. Wright

June 17, 1939 - August 28, 2015



WRIGHT, Professor Richard W., Ph.D

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Richard Wright passed away peacefully in his sleep at his home in Montreal.

Richard, the only child of Wells Dungan Wright and Anna May VanSiclen, was born and raised in Panama where his family was employed in the operation of the Panama Canal. His early years spent exploring the jungles with his father and travelling abroad during extended leaves, instilled in Richard a lifelong love of nature, a passion for travel, and a deep curiosity about other cultures. He moved to the USA to attend Dartmouth College (BA '61 in International Relations; Tuck MBA '63).

An inveterate traveller, Richard worked closely in his student days with the Experiment in International Living (Putney, VT) both as participant and as leader of several groups. It was on one of his Experiment trips to India when Richard had the immense pleasure of meeting and talking with Jawaharlal Nehru, a meeting that changed his life. On his return to the US, he declined an offer of employment from Exxon, and instead enrolled in the doctoral program at [Indiana University](#), where he completed his DBA in international management and finance in 1970.

Richard moved to Montreal shortly thereafter to teach at McGill University, where, over his 35 years at McGill, he helped build the department of International Business. He established exchange programs with universities throughout Europe long before they were common. For over 15 years, he escorted students on summer study trips abroad, giving preference to those applicants who had never had the opportunity to travel abroad so that he could teach them how to embrace a new culture, helping them to open their eyes, teaching them the magic. Rather than presenting a roadshow of 15 countries in 15 days, he ensured that they become intimately familiar with a single country and learn to appreciate its uniqueness.

Also during his tenure at McGill he met his future wife, Ursula Kobel. Married in 1981, he and Ursula continued their adventures, first on their own and later with their children after the births of sons Matthew and Justin. Combining travel with teaching abroad, Richard and family travelled extensively in Europe, Central America, and Asia, particularly in Japan, a country for which he had a special fondness, and where he and his family spent many months at a time.

In 1987, the family moved to Salem, Oregon, where Richard held the Helen Simpson Jackson Distinguished Chair in International Management at Willamette University, returning to McGill University after four years. Richard retired from McGill in 2000, but continued to teach, notably at the University of Richmond in Virginia, where he held the E. Claiborne Robins Distinguished University Chair and led further study trips to foreign lands. In the years following his second "retirement" (2005), Richard continued to travel the world, teaching in Germany, Austria, Greece, Colombia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and New Zealand, as well as at the John Molson School of Business in Montreal. Among his many interests, Richard harboured an intense love for classical music, especially that of Antonin Dvorak and Richard Wagner, and always made room in his schedule to attend operas in the cities he visited. One of the highlights of his non-professional life was attending performances at the Wagner festival in Bayreuth, Germany.

A gifted and passionate teacher, Richard had a profound influence on thousands of students over

the course of five decades and on six continents. Active until the very end, he taught his last class on August 12, 2015, two weeks before his death.

Richard will be sorely missed by his wife Ursula, his sons Matthew in San Francisco and Justin in Montreal, his brother- and sister-in-law John and Ann (Kobel) Keenan, and his brother-in-law John Kobel, as well as by his many friends, colleagues, and former students.

A Memorial Celebration of his Life will be held at 3:30 p.m. on October 31, 2015 at Galerie Avenue Art, 731 rue de la Commune West, Montreal. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Dr. Mark Rabinovitch Research Fund at the MGH Foundation, 1650 Cedar Avenue, Montreal, QC H3G 1A4 would be deeply appreciated.

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