Marc-Adéland Tremblay (1922 -)

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“In Memoriam. Frank Vallee, 1918-1999”

Un document produit en version numérique par Jean-Marie Tremblay, bénévole,
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M Marc-Adéland Tremblay, anthropologue, professeur émérite, retraité de l'enseignement de l'Université Laval, nous a accordé le 4 janvier 2004 son autorisation de diffuser électroniquement toutes ses oeuvres.

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Marc-Adélarde Tremblay (1987)

"In Memoriam. Frank Vallee, 1918-1999"

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It was with profound sadness that my wife and I, while at our summer residence in Les Éboulements, learned, at the time his funeral was being held in Ottawa, of the untimely death, on July 2, at the age of 80, of our friend Frank Vallee. He was Professor emeritus at Carleton University since his retirement in 1984 and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada since 1976, an honour reserved for exceptional scholars. His dear wife, Anita Hylkema, whom he met in Holland during the war, after 52 years of marriage was deprived of a husband and best friend, whom she described as a "unique individual." His two sons - Richard and Paul - and his two daughters - Frankie and Martine - feel the loss of a warm and affectionate father.

The Canadian anthropology and sociology community perceived the passing away of this remarkable man as a great loss not only because he did pioneering research work in a number of critical Canadian issues (ethnic relations, Native People of Canada and sociology of language) or was a scientific writer with such clarity of style, but also because he read widely, had an exceptional knowledge of anthropological productions and was a passionate lecturer admired by all his colleagues and students. But above all these human assets, he was a humble man who had charisma, compassion, vitality, good humour and joie de vivre. Not to mention his unusual skills as a story teller.

Frank was born in Montreal, the son of Richard and Clara Vallee. His father worked as superintendent of Montreal's Harbour Railroad. Frank left high school during the 10th grade to seek paid work. Shortly afterwards, he enlisted in the 14th Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery and fought on European battlefields. In the last few years prior to his death Frank was in the process of writing the history of his regiment.

Upon returning home at the end of the war, he became eligible, under the Veterans Rehabilitation Program, to register in a University program. He enrolled at McGill and in 1950 he got a B.A. (Honours, First Class) in Psychology / Sociology. That was quite an exceptional feat in a university of such high scholarly standing, for an individual who left his formal schooling at such an early age. In his case, a bright intelligence, his willingness to succeed and a rich experience abroad made for quite a solid mix. Frank knew that he had to get the highest academic degree to secure a university appointment. He applied and was accepted at the London School of Economics where he got his doctorate (PhD) in social anthropology in 1955. In 1953, when all his credits had been earned, he was hired for two years as a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh.

He went to Ottawa in 1955 to head the Research Division in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. It was the year that I learned about his existence! In 1955 I was a research associate at Cornell University and applied for the same position. The most qualified candidate for the job turned out to be Frank Vallee. He remained as Chief of the Research Division until 1957 when his predecessor of the same Research Division (Dr. Frank Jones) invited him to come at McMaster as assistant professor in the Department of Sociology. He stayed in Hamilton until 1964 when he left to become associate professor at Carleton University in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. One year later he got full professorship.

Going so successfully through the various academic echelons can be interpreted as a formal recognition of his research and scholarly achievements, his exceptional talent as a teacher and tutor, his unusual administrative skills as head of his department in the early 70s and his

conviviality with everyone regardless of class status, a research topic of which he had extended familiarity through John Porter's work and his own.

His first research experiences on the Tinkers-an itinerant, gypsy-like group in Scotland-and the Hebrides Islands people were not well known by his fellow anthropologists, but everyone knew, colleagues and students alike, how systematic Frank was in the gathering of data on oral tradition and old folk ways. He could hold his students, practically motionless, during hours on such fundamental ethnological topics.

His early field work among the Inuit, at the time when the shift from tradition to modernity was in process with the building of the Dew Line, led him to produce three books in a short period of time : *Kabloona* and *Eskimo* in the Central Keewatin both published in 1967 and *Eskimo of the Canadian North* with Victor Valentine, in 1968. These writings showed his analytic skills on the ill effects of extensive and rapid technological changes and the controversial impact of government paternalism. His longtime colleague and friend, Vic Valentine summed up to newspaperman Charles Enman the kind of scientific production these books represented by saying : "Very little was known of the conditions in which the Inuit were living and Frank, with his natural gifts of insight and judiciousness, was able to enlighten academics and government officials on the problems the Inuit faced, particularly as the white man began flooding into the north with the construction of the Dew Line." In broader terms, his studies on the Canadian arctic made reference to rapid changes "in the relationship between Inuit and non-Inuit in the context of economic and political development, especially the movement toward increased autonomy : immigrant adjustment and ethnocultural integration in Canada" ([http :// www.carleton.ca/emekie/biog.html](http://www.carleton.ca/emekie/biog.html)).

These special accomplishments led him to be appointed by the federal government to the First Northwest Territories Legislative Council from 1965 to 1967 where his input was in total harmony with the legitimate aspirations of the Inuit to gain greater say and power in the administration of their own affairs. In historical perspective, it was a major contribution. He was also a major contributor to the Survey of

Contemporary *Indians of Canada* (Harry Hawthorn et al., 1967) the first overall study of Canadian Indians. Three other major publications deserve mention : *Usage de la langue au Canada (with John de Vries)* 1980 ; "Contemporary Canadian Inuit" (with Derek Smith) in *Handbook of North American Indians* in 1984 and "Inequality and Identity in Multiethnic Societies" in *Social Issues : Sociological Views of Canada* (Forcese & Richer, eds.) 1988.

Such a research and publication profile (incompletely drawn here) was recognized by members of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association who awarded him in 1991 with the Outstanding Contributions Award-along with Gillian Sankoff and Fred Elkin.

Frank was an inspired writer, but his style was concise and clear. His basic philosophical tenet was to be understood by all (academics and people of all walks of life), while using concepts and theoretical schemes of the social sciences. One of the best demonstrations of such unusual ability among academics was his two page article in the book presented to me upon retirement : *La construction de l'anthropologie québécoise*, 1995. He succeeded in sketching the foundations of our friendship that spanned over a 40 year period and the kind of contextual environment that influenced my anthropological production throughout my career. The scope was wide but its expression required a limited space.

Frank was the close friend of so many people who enjoyed his personality and his company, his good humour, his charming style (he internalized all the assets of the "nice guy" as would say his close friend Bruce McFarlane) and his sensitivity to those who experienced difficult times. He will be missed not only by his close relatives and friends but also by all those who met him at one time or another. I felt highly honoured when he successfully proposed my candidacy to receive an honorary doctorate at Carleton University. Moreover, he was so generous about my deeds that I felt that I did not deserve as much!

Canadian anthropologists and sociologists lose a senior colleague who played a major and unique role in the establishment and consolidation of anthropology and sociology in both English and French Canada. As I implied earlier, his research work and his scientific pro-

duction were of high calibre. He has trained a large number of undergraduate and graduate students constantly being inspired and led by the highest standards of excellence in his teaching and tutorship. He demonstrated that a university professor could at the same time be a top notch researcher and a great teacher. He was a visiting Professor at University of Hawaii in Honolulu in 1970-71 and the Australia National University in Canberra in 1977-78. Frank also set the model that an intellectual does not deposit "son coffre à outils" upon retirement but continues to teach, write, advise students and be useful to many groups with which he had been associated throughout his "active" (that is, paid) career. It is a pattern that models my own retirement period.

This brief sketch does not assess the real value of such a man : it only shows the esteem and admiration I had for him as a scholar and as an individual. It is my dearest hope that a seminar will be organized in the months to come to fully analyze Frank's lifetime scientific commitments. In the meantime, in memoriam donations to the Frank Vallee Memorial Scholarship Fund could be sent at Carleton University.

Fin du texte