

“We’ve got to talk to the public and keep stressing the message with the public. Our case of electrical technology is public: ‘here’s what we need’ — needs to be used by the whole world.”

Wallace 1930—2011

“I’m an optimist from the point of view of the world there in the world today. I’m not pessimistic. I don’t think anything will improve unless we try.”

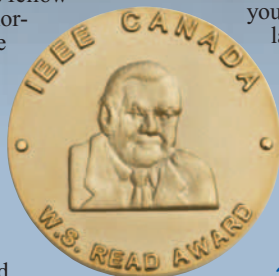
Remembering Wally...

The life of Wallace Stanley Read touched so many friends, colleagues, and yes, admirers; we count ourselves most fortunate to have been all three for more than 35 years. Wally taught not by lecturing but by example. He was a model volunteer and above all he demonstrated non-wavering love of his province, country, his fellow humans and indeed, his profession. In recognition of his enormous contributions, IEEE Canada named its highest service honour the “Wallace S. Read Outstanding Service Award,” as well as appointing him as its first Director Emeritus.

One of Wally’s more recent areas of service to IEEE has been through the IEEE Fellow Evaluation Committee, and we cherish our recollections of the time we spent together there. We also share with so many colleagues and friends fond memories of Wally’s sense of humour, as noted in these pages. But Wally’s unique way of making you feel the most important person in the room will also be sorely missed. Wally: “We’ll meet again, don’t know where, don’t know when; But I know we’ll meet again, some sunny day.”

*Ferial and Mo El-Hawary,
Canadian Atlantic Section*

I have been a long-time admirer of Wally for more than 20 years; receiving the “W. S. Read Outstanding Service Award” for 2011 has meant a lot to me. Wally had an ability to captivate you. His warm personality drew you to him. He took an interest in what you were doing and was always ready to share his knowledge and experience with you. It was never a stern talk, but rather one full of comedy, laughter and plenty of wisdom. He could, however, be firm with his position, but always showed respect for your opinions. He was always full of energy, and despite his failing health, participated in IEEE activities and was always the first to volunteer. Now that’s an example we should all strive to follow. He will forever be remembered.



“The smile you send out returns to you” – an inscription on the back cover of the Beach Boys “Pet Sounds” LP.

Ashfaq (Kash) Husain, London Section

* Wally Read, an oral history conducted in 2009 by Michael Geselowitz, IEEE History Center, New Brunswick, N.J., USA. In these excerpts, Wally is responding to a question on the future of IEEE.

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Wally was a wonderful human being—warm, helpful, inspiring. To my knowledge, everyone who met him thought of him as a friend. To me, he was one of my IEEE family, perhaps a very special uncle. It is my honour to share with you the Canadian aspects of his enormous contributions to IEEE.

Respect for Wally came from every quarter. A very distinguished leader in industry, Wally served as vice president of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro before becoming president of the Canadian Electrical Association. He was recognized by his country with its highest honour by being elected a Member of the Order of Canada. Academia recognized him with two honorary doctorates. His profession conferred on him its highest awards, recognizing him by election as a fellow of IEEE, the Engineering Institute of Canada, and the Canadian Academy of Engineers.

Wally's 35-plus years as an IEEE volunteer began as a member of the executive of the Newfoundland subsection of the Canadian Atlantic Section, serving as chair in 1976–1978. He became chair of the Eastern Canada Council in 1979 and continued on the Canadian Region committee, becoming Region Director in 1984. This was the IEEE centennial year, celebrating the creation of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers (which merged with the Institute of Radio Engineers in 1963 to form the IEEE). Wally decided to create a book, *Electricity: The Magic Medium*, to commemorate the achievements of the electrical industry in Canada over the previous hundred years and longer. He collected together an impressive group of contributors and asked Harry Prevey to be the editor. He convinced IEEC Inc. (the predecessor of the IEEE Canadian Foundation) to support the publication with a \$15,000 grant. This book is truly of archival quality. A few copies are still available from IEEE Canada, and PDF files can be viewed on the IEEE Canada website under “Digital Library.”

Wally had the gift of making people feel good while he guided them to improve themselves and opened doors for them. He used humour to relax people—his story telling and his theatrics were legendary. At the 2009 IEEE Canada Board spring meetings in St. John's NL, he arranged for a visit to a local pub, where in a private room upstairs, about 50 of us were inducted as “Honorary Newfoundlanders;” however, one had first to pass a “competency” test. This consisted of drinking tots of screech, singing a very difficult song incredibly quickly, and finally, kissing the lips of a large cod (one kept in the freezer especially for this purpose by the pub owner). In this special tribute to Wally, you'll find many similar such stories—remembrances that poured in from all across the Region as word of his passing spread.

Bob Alden, Toronto Section

Like all great leaders, Wally not only worked hard to achieve a vision, but could inspire those around him to do the same. Volunteers are not an easy group to motivate. Yet Wally did it with humour and guile. I well remember his last meeting as IEEE President, as he was about to hand over the reins to his successor. Wally pulled out several hats—a cowboy hat to illustrate “riding herd” on the group, a toque to point out that sometimes the atmosphere gets a little chilly, a fedora to imply that formality is sometimes required, and so on. This combination of keen human insight plus individual talent played no small part in his many successes at the international level—both within IEEE and in industry. Outlining these successes is indeed an honour.

I first met Wally in 1985, shortly after I was appointed as the Student Activities Committee (SAC) Chair. That was a signal year for Wally, too, as he was Director of Region 7, and became the first full-time President of the Canadian Electricity Association (CEA) that year as well. The CEA is the national voice for the electric utility industry and provides input to federal regulatory agencies. In that position, he worked to promote the interests of Canadian electric utilities and acted as spokesperson on issues of national and international concern to its members.

Wally invited me to dinner with him early in my tenure as SAC Chair, to share his ideas on the importance of helping our young engineers and engineering students to achieve great things in their careers. Wally believed strongly that of all the professions, engineers are uniquely qualified to create technologies for the benefit of mankind, and that we should imbue our graduates with the need to innovate.

Subsequently, our paths crossed often, and in many ways. One of Wally's missions was international standards, which he promoted first as President of CEA, and subsequently within IEEE. He was elected as IEEE Vice President (Standards) for the term 1993–4, where he had the opportunity to lead the Standards Association to reorganize and to become a more influential body on the international standards stage. In 2005, I had the great pleasure to present the 2005 IEEE Charles Proteus Steinmetz Award to Wally in recognition of his work around the world on standards. He was also the recipient of the John Jenkins Award from the Canadian Standards Association.

Following the completion of his term as Director of Region 7 (Canada) in 1985, Wally's progression towards IEEE President was furthered in 1988 when he served as IEEE Secretary. He served as Treasurer in 1989–90, before rising to President-Elect in 1995. As President, he carried his message forward, especially on the importance of IEEE as a global entity, and the need for service to the public. About this time, Wally became my mentor, as he expected me to follow in his footsteps to carry his message. However, it was not without some anguish on my part. Wally had a unique management style; he expected results and chivied his troops to accomplish them. When I was elected as Vice President (RAB) in 1996 he pointed out that IEEE members on the US West Coast had complaints that had not been adequately addressed.. (He gave me a “D” for failing to solve the crisis in a timely manner!) Needless to say I worked assiduously to resolve the issues. Wally definitely expected a lot from those he worked with; however, he gave back much more than he got.

On his award of the Honorary Doctoral degree from Memorial University, the orator noted: “... his capacity to keep the long view of a problem while working on detail and implementation, his ability to inspire ongoing enthusiasm and commitment in people from different backgrounds who are engaged in a particular piece of work, and perhaps the most telling characteristic, is his genuine recognition of the potential of other people in the workplace and his gift for helping them develop and contribute. Technocratic and bureaucratic skills are not sufficient in themselves to move mountains; to these Wallace Read adds a gift for problem-solving with people, which makes the essential difference.” A great tribute for a remarkable man. To those who knew him, it was no surprise when Wally was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada, the country's highest civilian honour, in 2003.

Ray Findlay, Hamilton Section

Lori Hogan, Newfoundland & Labrador Section

Some visitors from IEEE Japan Council were in town last fall. Despite having some health problems at this time, Wally made the trek from Corner Brook to St. John's to meet them. He then enlisted some help from the Section to make sure that the visitors got to see two of the three IEEE History Milestones we have in NL—the one for Marconi on Signal Hill, and the underwater cable station at Heart's Content. Wally and Helen personally escorted the visitors to these sights and more, picking them up at the airport and meeting them at their hotel each day. His sense of hospitality was impeccable, and the effort he put into making these visitors welcome would tire me. Wally is an IEEE legend; everyone involved in IEEE in some way anywhere in the world likely knows his name. I feel very fortunate to say I knew the man, at least for a bit. He was charming and genuine. I've had a few friends accompany me to various IEEE functions and they all remember Wally for that. We'll miss him.

Mooney Sherman, Northern Canada Section

I have only known Wally for a few years but it felt as if I have always known him. Wally was very caring, gentle, and passionate in his beliefs. He had great dedication and gave sound advice. One could feel his energy and compassion. I will miss him very much.

Cathie Lowell, IEEE Canada Administrator

Over the years we shared many stories, jokes and songs; some mornings before the Region meeting started he would sing to me. You could always count on Wally to mingle at the student congresses, where he usually had a crowd of students around him listening to his stories. Wally was the perfect gentleman, offering a coat when you were cold, a cheerful story when he knew you were down, and a song to make you smile. Region 7 meetings will never be the same.

Dan Coode, North Saskatchewan Section

The first regional meeting I ever attended on behalf of my section, Wally was the first to sit next to me and engage me in conversation. He was not only a terrific ambassador for the IEEE and Canada, but a really good person. I wish I had had more opportunity to get to know him better.

Sneeraman Rajan, Ottawa Section

Wally's contribution to the IEEE is countless. He was a great mentor, a passionate volunteer and a man with a big heart. His presence at IEEE meetings was always special to all of us. He always made it a point to talk to everyone and find out their welfare. He made us feel that IEEE is indeed a family and volunteerism is a long lasting bond. He along with his contributions will always be part of IEEE. He will be missed by everybody.

Marc Provencher, Québec Section

C'est une personnalité importante que perd IEEE. J'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer Wally à plusieurs occasions et je l'ai toujours vu traiter les gens avec dignité. Ainsi, à ma première rencontre lors d'une ECC à Montréal fin 70 et malgré mon peu d'expérience comme président de la section, il avait le don de me mettre à l'aise et ce avec respect. Aussi, lors du Section Congress de Toronto de 1990 je le voyais discuter avec tout le monde, comme si chacun était la personne la plus importante. Même lors de mes rencontres avec lui lorsqu'il était président de l'IEEE je pouvais discuter avec lui en sentant une écoute.

Bref, je crois que Wally faisait partie du club select des personnes qui plaçaient les intérêts de IEEE avant les siens. Personnellement, je garde un très bon souvenir de lui et je le considère comme un grand président de l'IEEE.

Rob Anderson, Southern Alberta Section

Wally approached everything in life with passion and enthusiasm. He was the quintessential volunteer, never telling or directing but gently guiding by example. He went out of his way to make you feel like you were part of the family. I remember flying into Newfoundland for a Region meeting. Wally was at the airport to greet you and make sure you had a ride to the hotel. Always willing to share his wisdom and stories of his work and personal experiences, Wally could be regularly found with a group of students, all intently listening as he talked. Wally had a wonderful magnetic and charming personality; his warmth and gentle smile put people at ease and made him very approachable. Wally's extended family will miss him a great deal. Long may his big jib draw.

Scott Lowell, Hamilton Section

An amazing life led by an amazing man. May he rest in peace and those who had the privilege to know him never forget him.

Bill Kennedy, Southern Alberta Section

At a CCECE banquet in Halifax a few years back, I had my twin nephews in tow. The entertainment for the evening was Wally demonstrating to the assembled masses how to properly eat a lobster. Dressed in bright yellow full sou'wester gear, he walked on stage with a lobster held in front of him, joined by Cathie Lowell suitably attired in a red raincoat, carrying the microphone. Wally then arranged a dozen shot glasses containing a dark fluid. He proceeded to drink the first and then tell us how to eat a lobster, explaining that as a young boy, lobster was garbage food that got in the fishing nets and ruined them. He then downed another shot. One of my nephews exclaimed, "Uncle Bill! Is he going to drink *all* of them?" As if in answer, Wally offered a drink to



Cathie, who, with convincing trepidation, accepted it. Next the lobster was taken apart and with another shot or two, Wally proceeded to eat it, beginning to slur his words. My nephews exclaimed, "He's getting drunk." I explained then to them that Wally didn't drink. The glasses contained coke. But they insisted he was and Wally was slurring his words more and more, and continuing to eat the lobster. Finally Wally took one of the claws and put it in his mouth and with an audible crack, opened it. The assembled masses groaned audibly. Then he took another drink and continued. What we all didn't know was Wally broke a crown with that bite, but didn't stop eating the lobster. After the "show" I introduced my nephews to a very "sober" Wally, and as with all young people, they received a warm reception from him.



Wally and Helen at IEEE Canada's annual spring conference in Calgary, May, 2010. A highlight of the weekend was celebration of Wally's 80th birthday, commemorated with a surprise birthday cake enjoyed by all.

N.Ed.

Many IEEE Canada members have shared with us their wonderful memories of Wally, and payed tribute to his achievements and contributions on so many levels. We appreciate the efforts of everyone. In particular, we heartily thank Bob Alden and Ray Findlay for their perspectives on working with Wally at the Region and International levels, respectively. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Mo and Ferial El-Hawary for recounting additional details of Wally's unparalleled record of service, and for the photo that forms the basis of the background image for this and the previous two pages.