

Educator Archie Turner dead at 84

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Staff

Peel Bio
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A man who set the foundations for public education in Peel is dead.

Archie Turner, a founder of the Peel Board of Education died Monday after a lengthy illness. He was 84.

Turner is acknowledged as one of the true builders of Mississauga, developing the public educational system here in the 1950s and '60s and later to become its first director after several local school boards amalgamated to become Peel in 1969.

A career educator, Turner was also a founding member of Sheridan College and served on the Canadian Education Association, the Canadian College of Teachers, the Ontario Association of Education Officials and the Ontario Council of Regents for Colleges and Universities. He was also the founding

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Turner was pillar of the community

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president of the Rotary Club of Mississauga.

And while Turner's professional achievements will assure him a place in history, it was his demeanor and unassuming personality that made him a trusted friend to so many.

"He was a wonderful man, a human being, he treated everyone with respect," said Mississauga councillor David Culham, a school teacher who worked under Turner. "No one knew the business of education better than he did but he never made you feel that your input wasn't important or necessary. The term great may be used too often nowadays, but Turner was a great man."

Turner's daughter, Ann McGhee, said her father not only loved education, but took great joy in helping out the community in other ways.

"I think he took great pride in the Rotary," she said. "He enjoyed fundraising for different charities. If he knew it was for a good cause, he'd be there."

McGhee said her father was also a chairman for United Way in Peel as well as being a founding board member of the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra, and an elder of the Clarkson Road Presbyterian Church.

Turner came to this area in the '50s as principal of T.L. Kennedy Secondary School and eventually became head administrator of the Toronto Township School Board.

"You have to remember back then, there wasn't too much out here," said McGhee. "But under his leadership, most of Peel's high schools were built." In fact, a Brampton school is named in his honor.

John Fraser, who succeeded Turner as Peel director of education, said under Turner's guidance the Peel Board came into existence in 1969 and he was the only person for the job.

"In those days, the different school jurisdictions caused a lot of friction," explained Fraser. "But those in charge knew that the only person that could bring them together and make it work was Archie Turner. They were right. Everyone respected him and the transition was so smooth that you would never know that the Peel Board didn't always exist."

Fraser also recalled a popular story that used to get told in the board offices concerning a business trip Turner took to Europe.

"He had a great presence, he looked important," explained Fraser. "So on this trip he was going from one country to another and in the car in front of his, some colleagues told the border guard that the man in the car behind was the Governor General of Canada."

"So when Turner's car pulls up he gets the royal treatment. He didn't realize what was happening, but he had the look of a dignitary and he pulled the gag off without knowing what was going on. He didn't find out until later what his friends had done."

Turner is survived by his wife Doris, sons Garth (a former federal cabinet minister) and Elgin and daughters Ann and Mary, and four granddaughters.

He will be resting at Turner and Porter at 2180 Hurontario St. The funeral will be held tomorrow at 11 a.m. in the chapel.

All Peel public school will fly flags at half staff tomorrow.