

William J. MacLean, OLS # 816
1924 - 2010



Bill was born in Kingston on August 9, 1924 and spent his youth on the family farm just east of Kingston. He graduated from Queen's University with a B.A. (Math) and began working for the Geodetic Survey of Canada. From 1946 - 1952 Bill spent summers in northern Canada on the SHORAN network of

trilateration. This project combined two of his joys: surveying and flying. With the encouragement of John Motherwell, a BC Land Surveyor, Bill undertook the exams for OLS and succeeded in the spring of 1953. Long absences from a growing family each summer persuaded Bill to change direction, and, with his newly acquired OLS, he began his surveying career in Bracebridge ON with Fitzmaurice & Boyer. However, an opportunity with Gordon McRostie in Ottawa arose shortly after this move and the family soon found itself back in the Ottawa area. During the years as a partner in McRostie MacLean & Fairhall, Bill was instrumental in several innovative projects, with the Surveyors' Registry being one of his proudest achievements. Long before the internet, Bill saw the merits of sharing data among professionals. He recruited all members of his family to sort and index microfilm records of every survey done by Ottawa firms. The registry now functions on a much more sophisticated platform, but it was Bill's determination that got it going. During this period, Bill served three years as a Councillor on AOLS, lobbying to restructure the terms of survey practice. Bill was a firm believer in the technical strength of the principles of control surveys and promoted it at every opportunity. In 1965, he joined the National Capital Commission (NCC) in Ottawa to fulfill his dream of control surveys in the Ottawa area. In his own inimitable way, Bill managed to incorporate flying into the building of the control survey network. Once completed, Bill took early retirement, moved to Westport, Ontario and, in his own words, 'lived happily ever after'.

Retirement did not slow down the number of projects on Bill's to-do list: renovation of a run-down cottage into a comfortable residence, restoration of antique tractors, design and construction of an airfield in Westport ('build it and they will come'), building of over 70 clocks, gardening, wood-cutting, flying, to name a few. The only thing to slow Bill down was Parkinson's disease with which he was diagnosed in 1997. Bill made adjustments to his activities according to his abilities, amazing everyone with his determination to enjoy his hobbies as long as possible. At the same time, he would reminisce with great detail on the SHORAN project and other achievements of his working career. In September 2009, Bill was a keynote speaker at the 100th anniversary of the

Geodetic Survey of Canada. Bill and Ruth raised three children, all of whom have inherited his goal-oriented personality. As the Parkinson's progressed and life became more challenging, Bill's last goal and joy was meeting his great grandson in August 2010. The next two months saw a swift decline in Bill's health and he passed away on October 12, 2010, leaving behind his wife of sixty-two years, Ruth, three children, Bernie, Ian and Laura, seven grandchildren and one great-grandson.