

Margo Ings Wilson
1942-2009



Margo Ings Wilson, Professor of Psychology at McMaster University and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, died peacefully at Hamilton's Henderson Hospital, on September 24, 2009, with her husband Martin Daly at her side. Margo was born in Winnipeg in 1942, to Edith Ings, a nurse who then worked in various locales in western Canada. In 1948, the two moved to the Gwich'in community of Fort MacPherson NWT, where Edith, the town's only trained medical practitioner, married the Hudson's Bay Company representative, John E.J. Wilson, and where Margo attended the one-room primary school, helped trap muskrats to finance the school lunch program, scooted about in a tiny but fully rigged dog sled, and learned what it's like to be the outsider.

She attended high school in Victoria BC, returning to the north to be with her mother each summer, and then attended the University of Alberta, graduating With a degree in psychology in 1964. Margo was initially attracted to clinical psychology, but having found part-time employment in an avian embryology lab, her interests turned in a physiological direction, and she did graduate work in behavioural endocrinology at the University of California and at University College, London, where she earned her PhD in 1972 for work on the behavioural effects of gonadectomy and hormone replacement in Rhesus monkeys housed at the original 'Bedlam' (Bethlehem Royal Hospital).

Back in Canada, Margo met Martin in 1975, and the two were inseparable for the rest of her life, co-authoring several books and many scientific papers on the psychology and behaviour of both nonhuman animals-and Homo sapiens. In 1978, Margo had the inspired idea that investigative materials in cases of homicide might provide a rich source of information on interpersonal conflict and thus, more generally, on human passions, and she persuaded an initially skeptical Martin that they should conduct epidemiological analyses of who is likely to kill whom, which they pursued for the next 30 years and which became their best known work.

In 1986, Margo undertook a year of intensive study at the University of Toronto's Law School, and became the first graduate of that institution's new MSL (Masters in Studies in Law) degree program in 1987. She also found time to serve a term as President of the Human Behavior & Evolution Society, an interdisciplinary scientific society that honoured her in 2009 with a Lifetime Achievement Award (one of only three that the society has bestowed).

Margo Wilson will be sorely missed by Martin and by the many students and postdoctoral fellows whom she has mentored, as well as by numerous friends and academic and scientific colleagues. She has been cremated privately, but celebrations of her life are being planned; friends can contact Martin (e-mail: daly@mcmaster.ca) for details.

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