

## *Jim Rainer, 1932–2018*

A SCHOLAR, A GENTLEMAN and a benefactor to many, long-time Alcuin Society chair Jim Rainer died February 2 in North Vancouver.

A quiet presence in the Society during its period of transition from a small West Coast collective of bibliophiles and aficionados of the books arts to one with a national mandate, Jim was a trove of information regarding its development. Generously, he shared this history and lore with new board members, ensuring continuity as the Society developed and matured into one whose work to award excellence in book design in Canada became known internationally.

Born in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Jim grew up on a modest, rural homestead on the Saanich Peninsula, north of Victoria. His youth gave him an appreciation for the outdoors, instilling in him a lifelong interest in not only trees but also wildflowers. While his business studies took him into the corporate world, his youthful experiences laid a foundation for a professional life in the forest products sector and membership in numerous natural history societies. He was field editor of *Wildflower*, the journal of the North American Native Plant Society, for many years.

While the leap from forest products to books may not seem a large one, Jim was delighted when he discovered the Society in 1990. “Although living in Vancouver since 1964, I did not know about the Alcuin Society,” he recalled in a reminiscence for the Society’s 40th anniversary in 2005 (“Reflections upon the Alcuin Society’s 40th Anniversary,” *Amphora*, nos. 140–141

[December 2005]: 69–76). “I discovered it due to a book.” The book in question was a limited edition portfolio created to showcase the art acquired to adorn the offices of Fletcher Challenge Canada, recently created by the 1989 merger of BC Forest Products and Crown Zellerbach Canada. The book seemed well designed, and Jim went looking for a competition in which to enter it. The competition turned out to be the Alcuin Society Awards for Excellence in Book Design in Canada. One thing led to another, and Jim became a member of the Society in 1991 and its chair from 1993 to 2004.

Generous not only with his time and talents, but also with his books, Jim made a legacy of his sizeable personal library through gifts to the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University. However, his greatest legacy may well be the generosity he inspired in others, opening doors that drew in others. His amiable nature and sensible attitude garnered support for groups such as the Alcuin Society. With his encouragement, Howard Greaves, the Society’s longest-serving chair, was recruited from among the Friends of the Vancouver Public Library (a common bond) and key editors of this publication, including my predecessor Rollin Milroy and in turn myself, found opportunities to serve.

His robust intellect and abundant energy will be missed by all those he touched.

~ Peter Mitham, editor

