

DAVID MOON (1923–2006)

The West Vancouver bookseller will be remembered for his wit, kindness and crammed book shop. By Terry Stillman

THE BOOKSELLING FRATERNITY lost another long-time member last May with the passing of David Moon, at the age of 83, on May 15 at the Maple Ridge hospital. Moon had been buying and selling books for 40 years, since taking over the stock of his mother's Vancouver bookstore. He moved the business to West Vancouver and tried three locations over the years, eventually buying a building with his partner, Chuck Bainbridge. Moon soon bought out Bainbridge's share and proceeded to settle in for a comfortable, though increasingly cramped, four decades; he managed to get more books crammed in per square foot than any other book dealer in British Columbia. It was time-consuming to shop there, but customers usually came out with an armful of interesting books.

In the late '90s Moon sold the old building and rented a smaller store nearby. Not all of the books in the old store would fit in the new one so Moon—always loath to throw away a book—rented several storage spaces to hold the extra stock. Then the inevitable happened: the new store started to fill up like the old store had. Bit by bit, stack by stack, aisle by aisle, the books and boxes piled up to the point where moving around was tricky. The odd avalanche occurred but no serious injuries were ever reported.

Moon never specialized in buying and selling books on any particular topic. He always preferred to have a general store where he could offer a wide range of subjects and types of writing. He never adapted to Internet selling, finding the idea too cold-blooded and impersonal. He was old-fashioned and preferred the traditional over-the-counter method of selling. A vintage cash register barely found room amongst piles of books on his counter.

Moon described himself as a slow reader, with a preference for history. He liked to surround himself with maps and relevant reference books while reading a book. "I'm still winning a war," he'd say in reference to his service with the Royal Canadian Navy during World War II.

In recent years Moon observed that local conditions—overheads and demographics—forced some used book stores to close, but he remained pleasantly surprised that other used book stores continued to open. He never prophesied the demise of the small, independent bookseller anytime soon, saying, "We booksellers are a hardy lot." Moon felt that part of the problem with the declining book business today is the fact that when he was young, many families lived in large homes, complete with large libraries, whereas today many people are living in condominiums with limited space. He also felt that people today don't understand the art of browsing—that buyers just aren't as leisurely about their book-buying because they're in too much of a hurry with life in general.

Moon suffered a massive stroke on May 13, while spending the weekend in Maple Ridge with long-time friend Michael Englmann and his family. Although he had been fit and active all his life, Moon had been annoyed that health issues were forcing him to slow down in recent years. He worked right up till his death, walking down to his store every morning to open up for a new adventure in bookselling. David Moon will be missed by many people familiar with his wit and kindness.