

## RONALD JAMES GILLESPIE, CM, FRSC, FRS, HFCIC, FRIC, 1924-2021.

Ronald (Ron) Gillespie was born in London, England, on August 21, 1924. He obtained his PhD in Chemistry at University College, London (UCL), in 1949, and started his first academic appointment there, as Assistant Lecturer, as he was finishing the requirements. He was promoted to Lecturer in 1950. At Brown University, Rhode Island, he held a nine-month Commonwealth Fund Fellowship in 1953-54. In 1958, Ron began his long and distinguished career in inorganic chemistry at McMaster University.

Initially with (Sir) Ronald Nyholm at UCL, Ron developed Valence Shell Electron-Pair Repulsion Theory (VSEPR), to describe and predict molecular shapes, and after Nyholm's early death was its major proponent. This led to his later work, with colleagues, on Ligand Close-Packing Theory (LCT). Always having a strong interest in undergraduate education, he helped modernize the teaching of chemistry; his VSEPR model made molecular geometry more comprehensible to generations of students. At McMaster, he trained many graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, who themselves went on to successful careers, throughout the world. His research interests included, as well as structure and bonding, superacids (and, related, *aprotic* media of very low Lewis Basicity) and the cations that could be formed in them, fluorine chemistry and noble-gas chemistry. He authored or co-authored more than 380 papers, two first year textbooks, and several books on molecular geometry.

Among the many recognitions that he received were Membership of the Order of Canada, Fellowship of the Royal Society of Canada, Fellowship of the Royal Society (London), Honorary Fellowship of the Chemical Institute of Canada, Fellowship of the Royal Institute of Chemistry, and several honorary degrees. He retired from McMaster University in 1988 as an Emeritus Professor.

Outside of chemistry, Ron enjoyed Scottish country dancing, hiking, skiing and sailing. Many of his students will remember crewing for him in his Wayfarer dinghy, which he loved to race. He continued to sail, in keelboats (up to 36 ft.), well into his retirement, cruising around Lake Huron-Georgian Bay. He and his family had a love of adventure and travel; he spent sabbatical leaves in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, and India, and also visited many other countries.

Ron died on February 26, 2021. He leaves behind his wife Marcelle, his daughters Ann and Lynn, and many friends. He was pre-deceased by his first wife, Madge.