

John J. FUREDY



FUREDY, John J.

June 30, 1940 – August 24, 2016

Professor emeritus of psychology, University of Toronto, John Furedy joined U of T in 1967. He held a double honours B.A. (philosophy and psychology), masters and PhD from Univ. of Sydney (1958-1965). He served on the Academic Board for ten years.

His research concerned autonomic conditioning, detection of deception, and nicotine and cognition. In all these fields he published extensively, often in collaboration with scholars in other countries. He railed against the use of the polygraph as a 'lie detector' calling it a 'psychological rubber hose.' [See www.antipolygraph.org].

He was influenced by libertarian thought and took a resolute stand on freedom of speech. (In spite of his Jewish heritage and avoiding Nazi deportation from Budapest in 1944, he opposed hate speech laws). He was a founding member and then president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (www.safs.ca). He warned against 'velvet totalitarianism' and the 'culture of comfort' and sought to protect the merit principle in hiring, and educational standards in general. He believed that truth was reached through the conflict of ideas and vigorously opposed postmodern trends undermining freedom of expression and individuality.

Colleagues and students found him an incisive and critical thinker, determined and principled, able to disagree with opinions without personal animosity, having a sharp wit and a generous spirit. Because he cared about excellence and standards, he was prolific writer of memos on departmental and university policies. Perhaps the Academic Board heaved a sigh of relief when this gadfly retired in 2005 and returned with his wife Christine to Sydney.

John was an obsessive duplicate bridge and keen tennis player; he loved body surfing and cross country skiing. He cycled to work summer and winter, wearing a Hawaiian shirt, parking his cycle in his office, crowding the colleagues who joined him for a lunchtime bridge game.

John lived, and bravely died, by Socrates' dictum "the unexamined life is not worth living." Web: <http://www.psych.utoronto.ca/users/furedy/> Messages to furedy@yorku.ca.

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