

## Obituary

**Peter Anthony Larkin**



The worlds of fish biology, fisheries, ecology, population dynamics, university teaching and administration, policy advisement, public communication – the list could go on lost a giant of a man on 10 July 1996 with the passing of Peter Larkin at the age of 71.

Born in Auckland, New Zealand, and raised in Saskatchewan, Canada, Peter studied at Regina College, the University of Saskatchewan (earning the Governor General's Gold Medal) and at Oxford University (Exeter College) as one of the youngest Rhodes Scholars ever, receiving his doctoral degree there at the age of 23, working with Charles Elton. In 1948 Dr W.A. Clemens, the far-seeing Head of the Zoology Department at the University of British Columbia (UBC), and the two Game Commissioners, James Cunningham and Frank Butler, arranged for him to come to British Columbia as the province's first Chief Fisheries Biologist, but jointly appointed to UBC, where he started courses in ecology and population dynamics. In Peter's words, "It was amazing that they chose someone whose graduate research had only been on shrimps and moles" – but surely, as we all found out, it was a brilliant choice!

In the spring of 1949 Peter started the first integrated province-wide limnological and recreational fisheries studies in British Columbia (BC), focused that year mainly in the west Kootenay area and employing both graduate and undergraduate students, including Cas Lindsey, Stuart Smith, Izadore Barrett, Craig MacPhee, Tom Northcote and Charles Lyons. These studies centred on different areas of the province for another four years and culminated in publications on BC regional limnology still actively used in its sport fisheries management as well as internationally.

In 1952 Peter set up the provincial government Fisheries Research Group on the UBC campus – a groundbreaking, innovative liaison between research and management in an academic environment – and today it flourishes there in close cooperation with the Fisheries Centre. Shortly thereafter, Peter took over directorship of the Institute of Fisheries, which had recently been started by Dr Clemens. Peter developed it into a world-recognized centre, organizing and publishing a long series of symposia on relevant fisheries topics, the H.R. MacMillan Lectures in Fisheries, as well as sponsoring a broad front of graduate interdisciplinary courses in economics, law and engineering hydraulics, along with core subjects in zoology, to provide the institute's graduates with a breadth and depth of training and understanding in fields related to fisheries.

From 1963 to 1966 Peter served as Director of the large federal Pacific Biological Station at Nanaimo, BC, but with the pressures of frequent long flights to Ottawa, and its climate – administratively, politically and otherwise – he soon returned to the academic atmosphere at UBC. There he founded and was first Director of the Institute of Animal Resource Ecology. For several years he taught an enormously popular course in biometrics, developing a still very useful handbook of 'elementary' statistical tests and sound advice. He received UBC's Master Teaching Award in 1971, was Head of the Department of Zoology (1972–1975), Dean of Graduate Studies (1975–1984), Vice President Research (1986–1988) and frequent close advisor to a number of UBC Presidents. He was named University Professor at UBC in 1988, a rare honour.

In addition to all this, he directed a long series of graduate students and published over 160 research papers and essays – the latter with brilliantly provocative titles and much food for thought as well as action. Who even today would not be tempted to read or reread his 'Play it again Sam – a perspective essay on salmon enhancement in Canada' (1974) or 'Maybe you can't get there from here: a foreshortened history of research in relation to management of Pacific salmon' (1979).

Peter Larkin was active on an amazing number and breadth of committees, boards, commissions and panels. These included eight in BC, such as those on ecological reserves, wilderness preservation, parks, natural resources conferences, and the Kemano review hearings on the controversial hydroelectric diversion scheme in the upper Fraser River system. He was on another ten for Canada, including the International Biological Program, Man and the Biosphere, Environmental Assessment Review, Fisheries Research Board, Special Committee on Problems of the Environment, International Development Research Centre, and the Northern River Basins Study. In addition he served on at least six bodies for international organizations, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management.

Characteristically he played an active role in promoting science and technology, serving on ten such boards in BC, including that precursor to Science World, the BC Research Council, the Science Council of BC, the Biomedical Research Centre and the Discovery Foundation. For Canada he was on various committees and boards of the National Research Council as well as the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Science Council. He served on the editorial boards of several front-rank journals.

Peter Larkin was frequently given honorary degrees and awards. Among these, he was made a Fellow of the Nuffield Foundation (Oxford University, 1961) and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (1965), and was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal (1977), the Fry Medal of the Canadian Society of Zoologists (1978) and the American Fisheries Society Award of Excellence (1984). He received an LL D from the University of Saskatchewan (1989) and a DSc from the University of British Columbia (1992). Recently (1995) he received the Order of Canada, in May 1996 the Murray Newman Award for Conservation, and in June 1996 he became a Member of the Order of British Columbia.

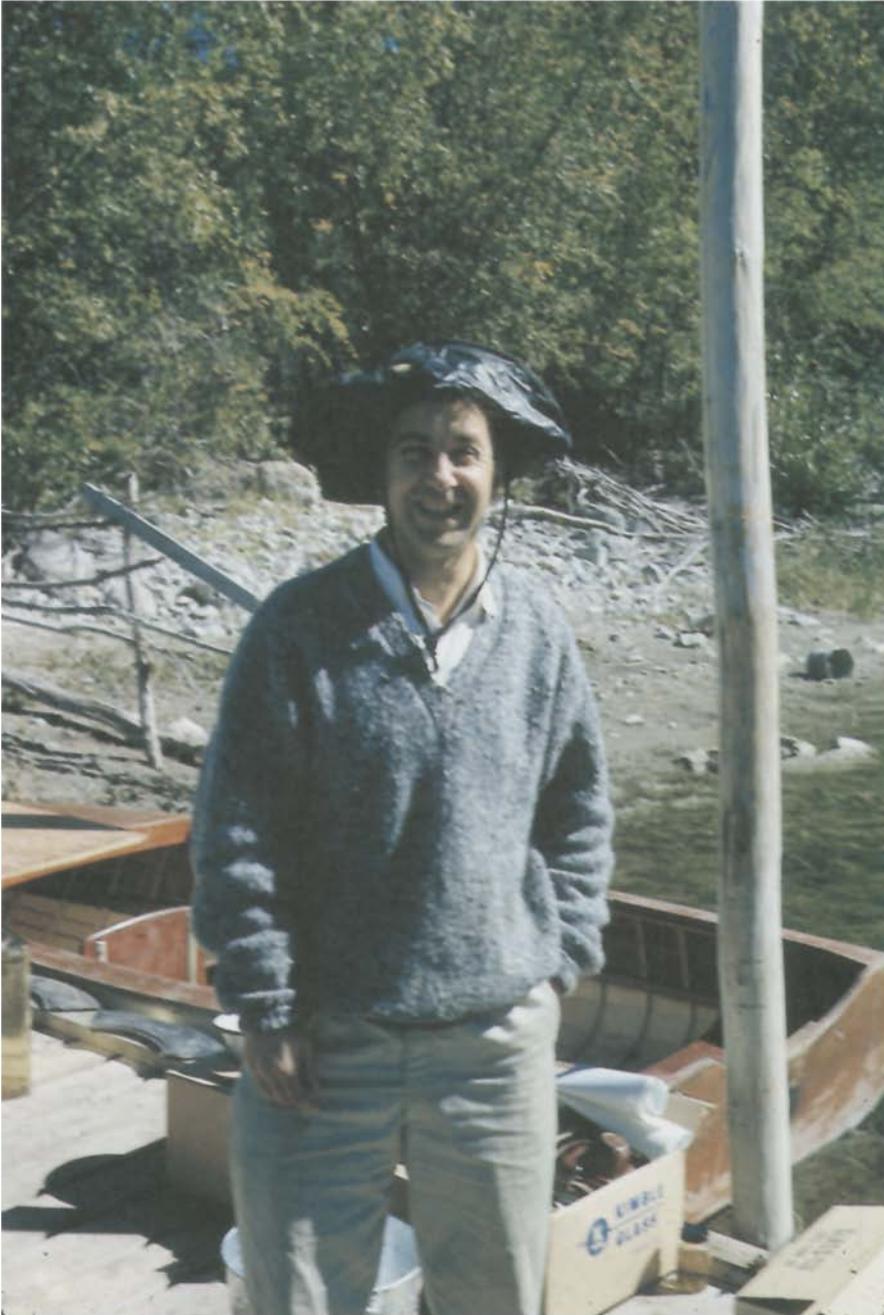
With his special wit and humour, Peter was in constant demand to write, direct, act and sing in skits and musicals, both on and off campus. One of his last brought me to tears of laughter on my retirement from UBC in May 1992.

Peter is survived by his wife Lois, their five daughters (Barbara, Kathleen, Patricia, Margaret and Gillian) and several grandchildren as well as a sister, an uncle and many cousins, nieces and nephews.

Through donations from Peter's colleagues, family and friends, the Fisheries Centre at UBC established on his retirement from UBC a public lecture series in his honour, the Larkin Lectures. These lectures will reflect Peter's wide-ranging interests and work in fisheries and will be published after peer review in the quarterly international journal *Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries*.

Peter Larkin has left a legacy of writings, thought, wisdom, wit and humour that will long be remembered, and even more importantly used in shaping our future actions in ecology, population dynamics, fisheries science and life. Thank you so much, Peter; for all these reasons, and a good many more, you were a very special man to countless men and women everywhere!

T G NORTHCOTE  
Summerland, British Columbia



Peter Larkin, photographed while helping graduate students in September 1962 at Paul Lake, near Kamloops, British Columbia. This lake was the centre for some of his early work on rainbow trout population dynamics and competitive interaction with redbside shiners. (Photo: Tom Northcote. Publication in colour was made possible by the generosity of the British Columbia Habitat Conservation Trust Fund.)