



# In Memoriam

**Max Dunbar**  
(1914-1995)

Max Dunbar, O.C., F.R.S.C., Professor Emeritus, Oceanography, McGill University, died in Montreal on St. Valentine's Day, February 14, 1995 at the age of 80. Max Dunbar was born in Edinburgh, where he received a classical and liberal education. At Oxford University he studied—or as Max always stressed "read"—Zoology. In 1935 he made his first research trip to Greenland and the year after to Spitzbergen, Norway. His diary from this expedition to Greenland was published in *Fontanus* volume 4 (1991). At Yale University his studies took him in the direction of marine biology. After completing his M.A. at Oxford he enrolled at McGill University where he took his Ph.D. in 1941. Max joined several Canadian Government research expeditions through which he became keenly aware of the fragility of the northern ecosystems and signs of climatic changes. He pioneered research on plankton in Arctic Sea water. Much of this research was done in Greenland where, incidentally, he served as Canadian Consul during 1941-42 and 1943-44 and learned to speak Danish fluently with a slight Scottish accent.

In 1946, Max Dunbar returned to McGill, this time as professor in the Department of Zoology: the beginning of a long and distinguished career that never really ended although he officially "retired" in 1982. His research was often done in collaboration with his own students. Few professors have fostered so many scholarly scientists from among his students. He was a dedicated and deeply committed teacher believing that undergraduate students are a university's prime concern. He authored an exceptionally long list of publications. Max Dunbar was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, received the Order of Canada and was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Copenhagen in 1991.

Max also saw himself as a musician who sang, played and recorded traditional Scottish ballads. His last book of autobiographical essays, titled *Essays from a Life: Scotland, Canada, Greenland, Denmark* was published as *Fontanus* Monograph V and was edited by Hans Möller. It came out just before Max Dunbar passed away and in fact was given to him only six hours before he died peacefully, content to hold the book in his hand.

A lover of books, from scientific journals to poetry, Max often said he could never leave McGill University because "it has one of the finest libraries in the world." Before his death he and his family asked that in lieu of flowers, donations be given to *Fontanus* publications. He remained to the end a staunch supporter of *Fontanus*.