

Philip E. Merilees 1940 – 2018



Dr. Merilees was an exceptional scientist and scientific leader in both Canada and the USA. He was a brilliant theoretician who made many contributions to our understanding of atmospheric and oceanic fluid dynamics. He was a gifted teacher, supervisor and mentor of students who became an exceptional manager of research and of researchers.

Phil, as he was known to nearly everyone, was born in Chatham Ontario and grew up and received his early education there and in Montreal. He obtained a BSc in Physics in 1960 from Sir George Williams, now a part of Concordia University, and an MSc in Physics 1962 from Carleton University in Ottawa. He joined the Meteorological Service of Canada (MSC) and studied Meteorology at McGill University, receiving a PhD in 1966. His thesis supervisor was Prof. Byron Boville. He then did post-doctoral research at the University of Michigan and at Florida State University, returning to the MSC in 1967 and then back to McGill as Assistant Professor in 1968, and Associate Professor in 1970. From '72 until '74 he was a Visiting Scientist at the National Centre for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder Colorado, returning again to McGill as Associate Professor and Chairman of the Department of Meteorology. In 1977 he joined the Atmospheric Environment Service (AES) as Chief Scientist of the Canadian Climate Centre. In 1984 he became Director General of Atmospheric Research. In 1987 he went to NCAR as Director of the Mesoscale and Microscale Research Division until 1991, returning again to AES as Director General of Atmospheric and Climate Research. Following retirement from AES in 1997, he became Superintendent of the Marine Meteorology Division of the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) in Monterey, California, becoming in the process a citizen of the USA as well as of Canada. From 2002 until 2006 he was back at NCAR and then finally retired to his new home in Bonita Springs, Florida.

As a working researcher and academic he published more than fifty papers. Many of these papers attracted international attention. His work led to his appointment to numerous international bodies and to recognition of his personal contributions to research and research management. He represented Canada on the Intergovernmental Panel for the Global Atmospheric Research Program, the Medium- and Large-scale Dynamics Working Group of the International Association of Meteorology and Atmospheric Physics and the Commission for Atmospheric Science of WMO. He chaired Grant

Review Committees for the National Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada and for the National Science Foundation in the USA.

He won a WMO Research Award in 1970 and the President's Prize of CMOS in 1978. He was made a Fellow of the AMS in 1981 and a Life Member of CMOS in 1987. He was awarded the Patterson Medal of the Atmospheric Environment Service in 1994 for his many contributions to meteorology in Canada.

As a professor or adjunct professor at several universities in both Canada and the USA, he supervised tens of master's and doctoral theses and influenced many more. He was a superb mentor of students and junior colleagues alike and helped them to achieve their best. As a leader of researchers and research teams his management style was open, supportive and generous.

Phil made many contributions to the Canadian Meteorological Society (CMS before 1977) and the Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society (CMOS after 1977): Chair Montreal Centre 1986-1989; Executive Committee 1974-1979; President 1975-1976; Scientific Committee 2000-2018; Co-editor Atmosphere- Ocean 1983-1986; Awards Committee 1983-1986; Publications Committee 1983-1986; Fellow 1999. It was indeed largely due to Phil's urging that physical oceanographers were invited to join the CMS and the name of the Society was changed in 1977 during his tenure as Past-President. The journal Atmosphere became Atmosphere- Ocean at the same time.

Well after retirement Phil continued to serve the community as a member of the NSERC grant selection committee and the CMOS Scientific Committee.