



Joan M. Bigwood, 1937–2017

Professor Emerita of Classics

Victoria College

University of Toronto

Be it resolved that the Council of the Faculty of Arts & Science deeply regrets the passing of Associate Professor Emerita Joan M. Bigwood, a member of the Victoria College Department of Classics, on Thursday, 16 February 2017, at the age of 80.

Born in Scotland in 1937 into a musical family, Joan was the third of four children of a Presbyterian minister, and grew up in Stonehaven (Aberdeenshire). An accomplished cellist, she played in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain in her youth. She received her M.A. (1st Class Honours) in Latin & Greek in 1958 from the University of St. Andrews. After a year at the Moray House College of Education in Edinburgh (1958-1959), she went to Cambridge MA on a full scholarship from Radcliffe College to pursue doctoral studies in Classics (Latin & Greek) at Harvard University. She completed her Ph.D. there in 1964 with a dissertation entitled “Ctesias of Cnidus (a study in Ionian historiography),” under the supervision of Herbert Bloch. She was hired forthwith by Victoria College, at the University of Toronto, where she spent her long career as successively Lecturer (1964-1966) and Don, Victoria University Women’s Residence (1964-1967); Assistant Professor (1966-1975); Associate Professor (1975-2001); Associate (1982-1990) and Continuing Member of SGS (1990-2001). She retired from the Department of Classics in the University of Toronto one year early, on 30 June 2001.

Professor Bigwood’s area of research specialization was Greek history of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, to which she joined an interest in the history and antiquities of Achaemenid Persia. She published a series of lengthy articles in this area dealing with a wide range of subjects, from Ctesias as a historian of the Persian Wars (Phoenix 32 [1978] 19-41) and of India (Phoenix 43 [1989] 302-16), to his description of the city of Babylon and its monuments (AJAH 3 [1978] 32-52, and his understanding of North West India in Achaemenid times (JHS 115 [1995] 135-40). The larger questions driving her research were how ancient authors worked, how Greeks perceived non-Greek peoples and cultures, and questions of trade and cultural exchange. After her retirement in 2001, she turned her attention, with particular tenacity, to the investigation of the representation of Persian women in Greek historiography, with articles on incestuous marriage in Achaemenid Iran, the Parthian queen Mousa, the queen-mother Sisygambis, and women in the ancient accounts of Alexander.

Professor Bigwood was a much-admired teacher of ancient Greek and the history of ancient Greece, especially of the historians Herodotus and Thucydides, whom she taught at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Her exacting standards made her a demanding instructor, but in turn she gave

unstintingly to her students and her wealth of knowledge enriched not only their classes but also a series of doctoral theses on which she served as a committee member throughout the 1990s.

Over her long career at Victoria College, she served in a variety of capacities, from her initial service as a Don in the women's residence to her long-running service as Discipline Group Representative in Classics. To the Department of Classics, she contributed to a term as Undergraduate Coordinator (1992-1995) and participated regularly in the annual "High School Classics Day" which brought so many local high school students to the University of Toronto campus. In addition, she served a term on the Editorial Board of Phoenix, Journal of the Classical Association of Canada (1981-1984). She was a kind and patient teacher, and a staunch friend to generations of students and colleagues at Victoria College.

Outside of the classroom and library, Joan was always good company and a generous friend and mentor to her junior female colleagues. She imparted wise advice about teaching and publishing over lunches that lacked nothing in the way of wit and kindly gossip too. She was an avid runner and a keen tennis player, who never ceased to regret the loss of the Victoria College tennis courts. She continued to play chamber music for quite a while during her time in Toronto, but gave it up eventually because of difficulties over practising in her apartment building. She retained her love for classical music, however, and enjoyed attending concerts with friends.

The Department of Classics at the University of Toronto deeply regrets the loss of our valued colleague.

Joan Bigwood is survived by her siblings Frank, Kitty, and Louise, and is sadly missed by them and her nieces and nephews.

Be it further moved that this resolution be inscribed in the minutes and that a copy be transmitted to the survivors as a token of our deep respect.

Alison Keith FRSC
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