A BIOGRAPHICAL TRIBUTE TO EARLE BEATTIE
ON HIS RETIREMENT AS EDITOR

By Edward Parker *

Centre for Continuing Education, York University

It was 1935 when the two of us met as "young Turks" in the depression-ridden prairie city of Winnipeg. Earle Beattie had come from Vancouver a few years before and at the age of 14 began writing articles and fiction for the Young Authors Section of the Free Press. Writing and editing came easily to him. He was writing a column by the age of 16 and became an assistant editor for the Section, following graduation from high school. He had become a moving spirit among amateur writers in Manitoba and his first paid job as a reporter for the Free Press was reviewing plays and shows around town. Later, he went to United College (now the University of Winnipeg) and became a college correspondent for the Free Press at 20 cents a column inch. I did the same for the Winnipeg Tribune and there was lively competition.

With these common interests, it was natural that we should work together. Earle succeeded me as editor of the student paper, The Manitoban, while also editing the United College magazine, Vox. In a senior year, we joined forces to write and produce a musical comedy "You Can't Beat Fun" satirizing mass education. Despite its dissonance on student power it played for three nights at the Winnipeg Civic Auditorium and was held over one night.

After that, our paths divided and Earle took a year out of university between his third and fourth year on something like a "student sabbatical" in journalism for Thomson's first news-
papers: the Timmins Daily Press as reporter and the Val d'Or Star as editor. He returned to college in fourth year, was short half a mathematics course in getting his degree but won the Chancellor's Prize, fittingly presented by John W. Dafoe, the noted editor. Earle had almost been expelled a short time previously for publishing a slightly erotic fiction piece about a Winnipeg man who had a mistress in Minneapolis. (The half-subject failure proved to be a technical error by the Registrar and he got his B.A. in 1951 when we were both teaching at the Ryerson Institute.) He got married in 1942 and then went to work in Montreal for British United Press and the Gazette. BUP transferred him to Halifax as Maritime Bureau Manager with war correspondent's papers covering the North Atlantic front. However, when recruitment began to "scrape the bottom of the barrel" it fished out Earle and he joined the infantry.

On his discharge from the army, Earle bought a run-down printing plant in Nova Scotia and set up "Beattie Printing and Editorial Services" to print and edit The Maritime Commonwealth, a weekly paper published by the C.C.F. He also did other printing and free-lanced articles, but both the plant and the paper declined after the war and Earle had to leave Halifax in search of a job. He landed in the International Service of the C.B.C. in Montreal as a news editor where he worked for a year. He remembers how he received an unsettling phone call from me one day in 1949. I had just accepted a job as Director of the School of Graphic Arts at the Ryerson Institute. Would he help us create a Department of Journalism at Ryerson? Two days later it was all arranged and two old cronies and press rivals from Winnipeg had once again joined forces. He became Chief Instructor in Journalism and, within a year, we acquired a third person as Instructor in Journalism, Ted Schrader. (Ted came after Earle as department
head, not before, as Wilfred Kesterton states in his history of Canadian journalism.) Ted followed him as head when he temporarily moved out of teaching in 1955.

At Ryerson, Earle had started writing for *Maclean's* magazine, gathering the material in summer for articles on subjects across Canada and composing them during the winter. He also did one for the *Saturday Evening Post* on stock swindlers of Bay Street, and managed a dozen pieces for *Chatelaine* and *Imperial Oil Review*. We both left Ryerson after five years of service, seeing our graduates getting good positions in all the media across Canada. Earle went to Imperial Oil as a writer for the Review and I established a public relations business in Toronto. At this juncture his dramatic articles, "The Toronto Slum Empire -- A Blot on the Face of a City" written with a colleague while they were at Ryerson, began to appear on the front page of the *Toronto Telegram* in 1956. They held that position for 13 days running, with the two slum bosses going to prison on the day of the final article, after police had assessed the writers' amateur sleuthing.

As the decade of the 60's dawned, Earle returned to teaching by accepting a professorship in the journalism department at the University of Western Ontario. He taught at different times all the courses in newspaper, magazine, radio and television, then developed an interest beyond techniques—that is in communication and mass media studies which he pursued in graduate school at Columbia and the University of Iowa. "Theory in "communication" and "media in society" became abiding interests. He became a strong critic of the defects of journalism, presenting his views in a far-ranging brief to the Davey Committee in 1969, and testifying later as an expert witness in the monopoly trial of K.C. Irving. When he came to York University's
Atkinson College in 1972, it was to concentrate on these broader and deeper subjects with what might be called an "opus" view of Communication and Mass Media that he had developed by 1980. Set forth in the summer issue of The Canadian Journal of Communication, it was summed up in a footnote:

The word sharing or holding in common is what communication means. The mass media, being one-way, do not qualify as communication and the little feedback that occurs through polls, letters or phone-in programs are controlled trickles into the mainstream of information. To be called communication, media must include operating cybernetic loops with significant exchange between senders and receivers; dialogue must replace monologue...The media do, however, inform; but because of their excommunication nature they may actually alienate.

His interest in themes of ownership, control and decision-making in media was developed at the Media 75 conference, held at York, which he chaired along with the former editor of Content. He was then developing the view that ownership should be neither by government or conventional business, but function through the democratic co-ops structure. A research project in 1979-80 took him to media co-ops...in Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Europe (Scotland, Denmark, Holland, France).

A historic study of a consumer co-op was provided by a daily newspaper that appeared in Winnipeg for 13 months in 1948-49. The Winnipeg Citizen, a co-op newspaper, before was brought down by problems including high-cost Canadian Press service, insufficient advertising, ideological infighting and shortage of operating capital. By popular vote Earle was asked to
come from Halifax to Winnipeg for the editor-
ship. A little bit of history was perhaps made
when he met the General Manager, John Sweeney in
Toronto and found Sweeney particularly pessimis-
tic. Likewise, I declined a similar invita-
tion.

The Canadian Journal of Communication was
created by Earle, his wife Gisele and others
four years ago as the successor to a magazine he
had founded in 1974. They called the first one
Media Probe, a "Town and gown" periodical,
because it aimed at bridging the gap between
academic analysis and the work of media people
with an investigative journalism tendency. Out
of its core group however, emerged the Canadian
Association of Communication which joined a sim-
ilar effort by the University of Windsor. The
two initiatives resulted in the creation of the
ongoing Canadian Communication Association.
The Journal became its official organ for two
years but recently reverted to independent
status with affiliation. This year when Earle
reached retirement age, the Journal was sold for
a nominal sum to Dr. Eugene Tate of Saint Thomas
More College, The University of Saskatchewan.
Dr. Tate was Chairman of the Journals Advisory
Editorial Board.

Despite a very busy extra-curricular sche-
dule, Earle teaches two and a half courses a
year out of a list of four: Communication and
Mass Media, Theories of Communication, Televi-
sion As A Social Force and Public Media and
Social Policy --all of which he personally
created. In the past ten years, his own writing
was perforce reduced to a minimum, but he did
research and produced an 80,000 word report on
violence in magazines for the Ontario Royal Com-
mission on Violence in the Communications
Industry. This year he became coordinator of an
Atkinson College Communication Program, involv-
ing seven departments.
The former editor of The Journal carries on at Atkinson College in his retirement with one spare-time activity as a consultant on communication books for Butterworths, the international academic publisher. The book publication program, which commenced a year and a half ago, now has half a dozen titles ready for publication.

Earle, we wish you a busy life of fun and frolic after an active, often controversial career, in the mills of the media and the halls of academe. Fare well.

*Edward Parker, who has known Earle Beattie since the mid-1930's, volunteered to write this tribute when he learned of Earle's retirement as Editor. The new Editor and readers of the Journal join Professor Parker in offering best wishes to Earle and Giselle Beattie.