

IN MEMORIAM

Edmund D. Johns (1933–2012)

Kayo J. Roy

*By any measurement, Ed Johns was a very special person.
His was a gallant and useful life.*

EDMUND DAVID JOHNS, a deeply respected and loved member of the Toronto and Scarborough community, died on Sunday, 3 June 2012, at the age of 79. He had been in poor health for a number of years, and without question, showed great courage in his fight with a difficult health issue. Ed spent many summers in the Magnetawan area, where he met and fell in love with Jean Miller. They married on 15 October 1955 and were about to celebrate their 57th wedding anniversary.

Born in Toronto, of Welsh descent, on 14 March 1933, his passing marked the end of a lifelong interest in birds, especially warblers and shorebirds. In 1944, at age 11, while delivering the Globe and Mail newspaper, one of his customers saw him admiring



David Sibley (left) with Ed Johns at Cape May, New Jersey on 18 September 1988. *Photo by an unknown tour participant.*

the birds in a front yard tree. This was his introduction to the world of wood-warblers and Ed was hooked for life.

For some 35 years, Ed participated in the annual Toronto Christmas Bird Count and he played a key role over

many years in the Toronto Spring Warbler Count. He was fully committed to the five-year Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas (1981 – 1985), but his illness prevented him from participating in the second Atlas. Ed took many trips to observe birds around North America. Two favourite areas for him were Churchill in Manitoba and British Columbia. He loved to visit Cape May, New Jersey, and he truly enjoyed birding in Florida, Texas and California. There is no question that his late-June 1987 visit to Alaska (Kodiak Island, St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs and the Yupik Eskimo village of Gambell on St. Lawrence Island) remained his very favourite birding experience.

In June 1985, we took our wives on a trip to Western Canada and while in Churchill, Ed elected to arrange for the rental of a vehicle for three days. His frugal nature came into play as he rented the lowest priced vehicle available. The car had virtually no floorboards, but as he exclaimed, 'the price was right.' We drove many miles on dirt and gravel roads, but because of the missing floorboards, at times we were unable to see the ladies, who were sitting in the back. Ed was in serious trouble as Jean and Diane did not get the dust out of their hair until we were in Edmonton four days later. 'No matter' Ed said 'we got crushing views of the pair of Ross's Gulls.'

Those of us, who knew Ed through his deep-rooted passion for birds, are also aware of his intense love of nature and his genuine concern for the environment. He was a strong advocate of protecting the environment and was not afraid to voice his concerns at every opportunity. A long-time member of the Toronto Ornithological Club, the Ontario Field Ornithologists and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (now Ontario Nature), his presence will be deeply missed at the meetings and field trips of these highly respected organizations.

In addition to his interest in birds, Ed was an accomplished photographer. He had a great eye for capturing images of birds, flowers and nature that won him many ribbons and honourable mentions from the Toronto and Scarborough Camera Clubs. He truly loved the outdoors.

Ed was a tremendous sports fan, especially hockey, where his knowledge was extensive. For over twenty years he found the time to coach peewee to midget aged players in the old Metropolitan Toronto Hockey League.

He was, by his calling, a long-time valued, dedicated and hardworking, self-employed insurance and financial advisor. His career spanned some 40 years with Mutual Life of Canada. Ed enjoyed his work and was determined to devote his time and expertise in helping his many clients reach their financial goals.

Your Canadian source for binoculars, spotting scopes and accessories.



Great optics for less than you'd expect!

RANGER 8X42
\$419 CAN MSRP*



RANGER ED 8X42
\$629 CAN MSRP*



SHRIKE 8X42
\$169 CAN MSRP*

To view Eagle Optics products visit your local Wild Birds Unlimited



eagleoptics.ca

*Dealer may sell for less.

Photo by Brandon Holden | peregrineoptics.com

By any measurement, Ed Johns was a very special person. His was a gallant and useful life. The combined strength of his courage, his love, his honesty and his integrity gave his lifestyle a meaning. He wore life with good grace, never complained even once about how the cards were dealt, and he walked out of it with dignity. Yes, we do mourn his passing and our lives are diminished, but we are profoundly grateful for the rich privilege of having known Ed, and each one of us, in our own way, sharing with him the adventure of life.

He leaves his wife Jean, whose love and consummate care of Ed over the many years of his illness speaks volumes of the character and substance of this lady, his three sons David, Glen and Gerald, and six grandchildren.

Kayo J. Roy, 13 Kinsman Court,
Fonthill, Ontario L0S 1E3
E-mail: kayoroy@niagara.com

Editors' note: a similar version of this tribute was published in the Newsletter of the Toronto Ornithological Club.