

Professor Brendan O'Grady

This year, 2017, marks Professor Brendan O'Grady's 70th consecutive year in the classroom. He started his teaching career at Power Memorial Academy in his native New York City in 1947, the same year he graduated from his beloved University of Notre Dame with a Bachelor's degree in English Literature. For the past two decades, he has been a much-in-demand professor in the Seniors College associated with UPEI, offering a variety of literature courses—on poetry, on Shakespeare, and, perhaps needless to say, on Irish literary topics. In between, beginning in 1948, he taught with great passion—with great love for his subject matter and great commitment to his students—first at St. Dunstan's College and University, then from 1969 until his retirement in 1996, at the University of Prince Edward Island. Awarded an Honorary Degree by UPEI in 1990 in recognition of his scholarly work illuminating the long and deep historical connections between Prince Edward Island and Ireland, he was named Professor Emeritus after his retirement. In 2012, he was presented with a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, further honouring his long career as educator and scholar.

The son of Irish immigrants to New York City, Professor O'Grady grew up with a profound appreciation for the value of education. Following his studies at Notre Dame, he undertook a Master's Degree at Columbia University. Wooed north of the border to teach at St. Dunstan's, he continued his studies, receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Ottawa while at the same time establishing himself as an integral member of the St. Dunstan's community. Rising to the rank of Professor and Chair of the English Department, he also served as Dean of Studies and Academic Vice-President. He was also a member of the University Planning Committee that led to the formation of the University of Prince Edward Island in 1969. Following the establishment of the new university, he served for many years as President of the St. Dunstan's University Board of Governors.

In addition to educating three generations of Islanders in the university classroom—including some of his own seven children!—Professor O'Grady pursued an active scholarly agenda focused mostly on Irish literature and culture. He became a particular advocate for the novella "The Weaver's Grave," a neglected masterpiece by Seumas O'Kelly, a contemporary of James Joyce. Professor O'Grady's most enduring scholarly project, however, is his book *Exiles and Islanders*. Published in 2004 by McGill-Queen's University Press, this is the definitive account of the Irish settlers on Prince Edward Island. A true labour of love and an adventure in research and writing shared with the love of his life, his wife Leah, *Exiles and Islanders* might be read as his gift to the Island that he adopted as home and that adopted him in return. A founding member of the Celtic Heritage Association of Prince Edward Island and the current Patron of the Benevolent Irish Society, Professor O'Grady remains active in Island cultural circles.