

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.
Robert Frost

The many public tributes paid to Helen Anderson since her death in January 2007 presented a picture of a very active, intelligent person committed to many educational, women's and civic organisations. So to concentrate in this tribute on her work with the NBSRT alone might seem a bit constrictive. Yet that was how the members of our society came to know her best. In our local and provincial meetings we came to admire and love her sometimes prickly personality, her determination and her commitment to the many jobs she so willingly undertook on our behalf.. She was active at the executive level in this organisation almost since its inception because she truly believed that she and her fellow retirees deserved to enjoy the benefits of their years of work in the province's schools. She was at the forefront of the early struggle to establish decent pension and health care benefits because she knew that on such struggles dignity in retirement depended. In her later years she took special delight in knowing and passing the word that she had been drawing a pension longer than she taught.

Some of us had the pleasure of Helen's company on long drives to meetings around the province. And as we travelled, she continued her life-long love of education by teaching us about the past history of the society and impressing us with her vision of its present and future importance. She was an active supporter of the many changes that we have seen in the society in the past few years and delighted in the growth of our membership. If we ever needed it, she was living proof that advanced years need not close our minds to the benefits of change; well into her nineties she spoke up in our meetings forcefully and eloquently for the restructuring of our finances, record keeping and organisation. In truth, she had little patience with those who were suspicious of all change; and her interventions in the debates at provincial and branch meetings made no pretence that she suffered timidity gladly.

Her failing eyesight over the past decade and her slowed mobility were burdens she bore with considerable courage. At branch and provincial gatherings, lucid thinking and clear expression remained her hall mark. As recently as our meeting in Fredericton last fall, she showed yet again that she had forgotten very little of what she knew of the development of the NBSRT. We were watching a presentation that illustrated how much information was readily available on our web site; it was complete except for a few names of early executive members. To the surprise of no-one who had worked with her for any length of time, and to everyone's admiration, Helen was able from memory to fill in the blanks - to supply not only the missing

names but also when they served and in what capacity. There was no-one else in the organisation who could have done so. In her home branch in Saint John we are fortunate that we were able last summer to capture for the archives some of the sharpness of this memory in a DVD oral history of the NBSRT, and a few anecdotes of her early days in the organisation.

She was a life member of the society at both local and provincial levels, and held, for the past several years, the executive position of Official Historian. Unofficially she was a living history; and her passing will leave a huge gap in our meetings . She very rarely missed one; and in our deliberations to come we shall surely miss her dedication, her independence of thought and her quiet wisdom. Those have, indeed, "made all the difference."