

Tom Raddall: “exemplifying the Acadia spirit”

By Rachel Cooper ('89)

If alumni are Acadia’s lifeblood, you would be hard-pressed to find one more dedicated to the University than Tom Raddall. He has a keen mind, a sense of humour, and an abiding loyalty to Acadia.

Raddall graduated in 1957 with a degree in chemistry and a plan to become a dentist. However, his path was complicated. He began in engineering, sticking with it for two years before deciding it wasn’t for him. “I wanted to take dentistry, so I wrote my father and said I wanted to change courses,” he says.

The permission from his father, the influential Canadian writer Thomas Head Raddall, was concise:

“Dear Tom, that’s a damned expensive vocational guidance course you’re taking.” Raddall switched to a BSc and took a major in chemistry, cramming all the required biology courses into his final two years.

“Back then, enrolment at Acadia was probably around 700,” Raddall says. “We were a very closely knit family – you knew everybody.” He made good friends with whom he still keeps in touch.

“From almost the day I graduated, I felt I owed Acadia,” he says. He had noticed other students receiving financial support through bursaries or scholarships “though I was never smart enough to get one,” he jokes. “I thought, you know, this is a good thing. And that’s when I realized that Acadia needed support, as any university does. Their alumni are very important.”

After he graduated from dental school and paid off his debts, he gave regularly to Acadia’s Class of ‘57 fund. “It just increased over the years until I got involved with the Board of Governors and then really appreciated how much Acadia needed financial support,” he says. “My support went up big time then.”

Governor of the Year

Raddall served on the Board of Governors from 2001-12, during which time he sat on the Fundraising, Finance, Executive, and Investment Committees.

In 2003-04, he was recognized by the Acadia Students’ Union as Governor of the Year for his “outstanding effort to communicate with the student body and (for) exemplifying the Acadia spirit.” The citation read, “The students of Acadia University are forever grateful for your dedication to our school.”

While on the board, he set up a fund for two \$5,000 scholarships to support students from Liverpool or

Queens County, Nova Scotia. The scholarships were in memory of his mother, Edith Freeman Raddall, who studied music at Acadia.

His mother seems to have started a family tradition. Along with Raddall, his sister Frances ('59) and one of his sons, Blair ('86), are also Acadia alumni. His grandson Thomas is studying here now.

Serving on the board gave Raddall insight into Acadia’s operations. “I got to appreciate just how

important alumni work was in supporting the university,” he says. “It is extremely competitive to get students. The support of alumni is a very big part of raising money to attract not only more students, but top-notch students.”

Born and raised in Liverpool, Raddall has lived there all his life, retiring 16 years ago. “One of the reasons I took dentistry was so I could come back here. I’m one of the original homers,” he says with a laugh. His two sons, Thomas and Blair, are also dentists and came back to Liverpool, where Blair has taken over his practice.

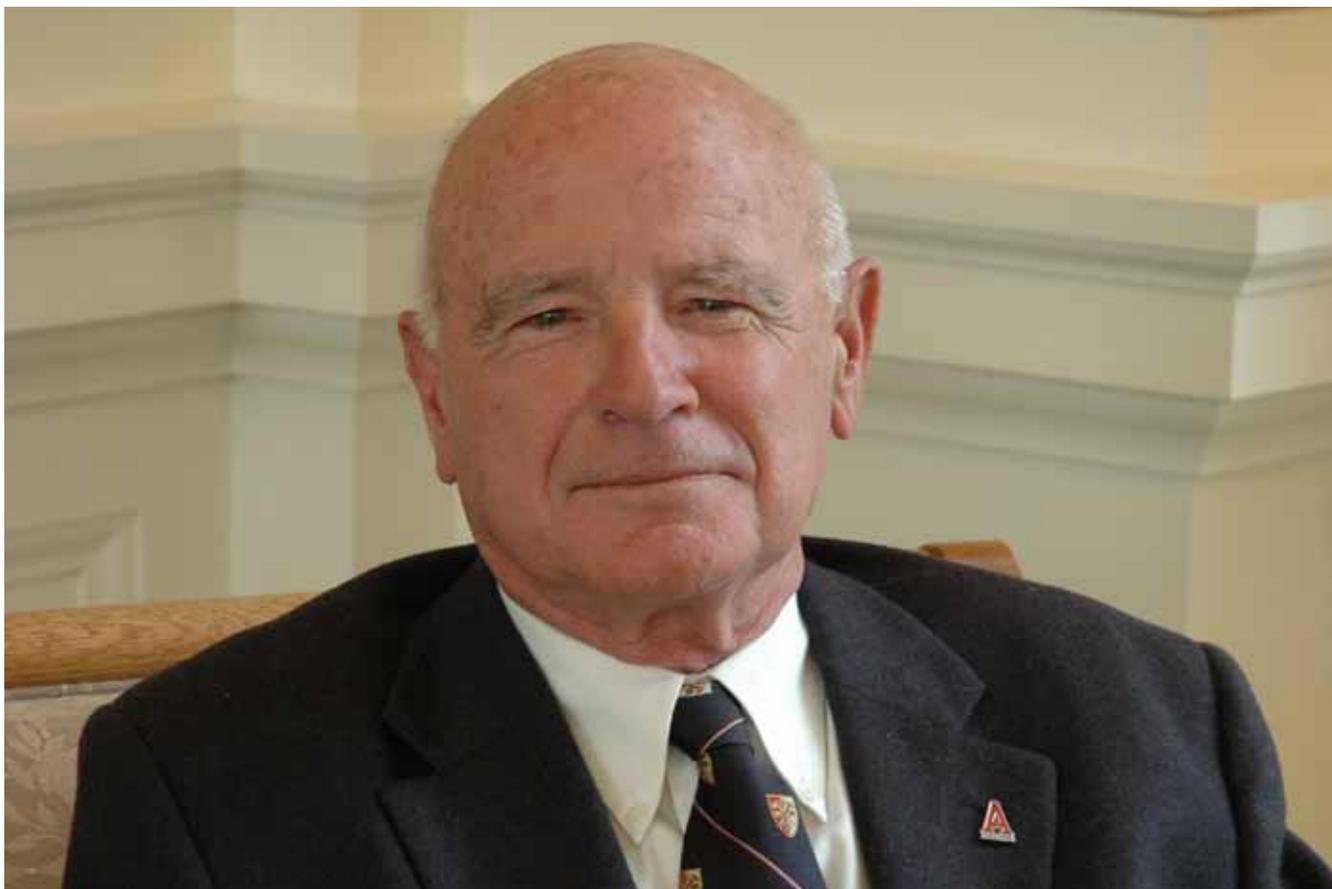
Raddall’s community work there is well known. Besides having been president of the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia, he has served in the Kiwanis Club, Liverpool Curling Club, Family and Children’s Services,

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Dr. Tom Raddall: "Alumni are very important."



and the Queens County Museum/Thomas Raddall Research Centre.

A creative approach to recruitment

When Raddall learned that Acadia was not attracting as many students from western Nova Scotia as it had in the past, he took direct action in a way that was simple and creative.

For each of the 12 years he was on the Board of Governors, he and his wife, Pam, hosted an afternoon reception at their home to encourage students from Queens County to apply to Acadia. "Every year, between Christmas and New Year's, we'd invite a

professor from Acadia to come over and speak to prospective students who were in their last year of high school," he says. "All the local students who were going to Acadia were also invited."

The receptions worked. Out of perhaps 21 students from the Liverpool Regional High School who might attend university in any year, between seven and nine come to Acadia.

Although now retired from Acadia's Board of Governors, Raddall remains active on the Fundraising Committee and is committed to supporting the university. "The alumni and friends of Acadia are where the money has to come from," he says.