

*Presentation to Board of Regents  
By the Committee to Save the Memorial Library  
on Behalf of the Mount Allison Federated Alumni  
September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 at 0930h*

Chairman McCubbin, Regents and Members of the Administration:

Good morning. Thank you for agreeing to hear our presentation.

My name is Bruce Coates and my colleague is Dr. Jean Cameron. We are both Allisonians and charter members of the Committee to Save the Memorial Library which has been established here on the Mount A campus.

We two represent disciplines of math and physics, the arts and medical sciences, and our core colleagues come from fields of architecture, engineering, marketing, education and the fine arts. (I should perhaps also mention that I served the country for 23 years as a proud member of the Canadian Navy.) Let me say that neither of us – nor, to my knowledge, none of our colleagues -- have either horns or tails. It's also been suggested to us that we, as a group, (*and I quote*) “lack truthfulness, honesty and integrity”. Such are the penalties of advocacy. I think I'd rather have horns.

It must be strange for you to see us in the flesh. At any rate it's good to finally see you all face-to-face – even if we'd rather have done so much earlier.

So why, you ask, have we given up well-earned retirements or potentially lucrative pursuits to engage in a new career of hassling the Mount Allison Board of Regents and its Administration? Believe me, we have been no happier pushing SEND buttons than you have been pushing READ buttons. That you are still around, volunteering to run this place, speaks wonders for your durability.

Today we are here representing the eloquently presented thoughts and concerns of hundreds – perhaps thousands – of Allisonians and Friends of Mt. A. We can only hope that those who have corresponded with you – or rather, to you, as responses have been hard to come by – have been polite and understanding of the important work you are charged to perform.

(Cameron)

Good morning.

Before I begin I am going to pass around this brown envelope and ask each of you to take from it one of the small white envelopes that you will find therein. Please put it in front of you, unopened. I will bring your attention back to these white envelopes later this morning.

On my way here this morning I made a detour to the Mount Allison Alumni Memorial Library to have another look at the subject of our dialogue today.

The student effort at demonstrating their concern that was evidenced on the lawn there this morning caused me to pause in my hurriedness and really take a moment to reflect.

In case you haven't had that opportunity, I am asking you to do that with me now. Please set down your pens, turn off your blackberries and rise and join me in ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE so we may together remember and reflect what the Mount Allison Memorial Library is really all about. While you pay homage to those who were never able to return from battle to Mount Allison I ask you to think of the difficult questions facing us all in the day ahead and look into your hearts for the answers that will allow us all to achieve BETTER for Mt A.

Please rise in honour of our Allisonian veterans.

### ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE

Thank you.

Bruce has mentioned that the dialogue around this issue within the Mount Allison family should have begun much earlier. The files in your computers have indicated beyond doubt that there is unfinished business. That is because the dialogue has never, never taken place on this issue of grave importance. The community – the grassroots stakeholders -- has not been canvassed for ideas, feelings, alternatives, options. The situation was presented as a *fait accompli*.

When word of the demolition of the Memorial Library building finally emerged, the rumbling began -- not surprisingly. Whenever a question about it was asked – on the Presidential Tour or at the reception for emeritus faculty, or wherever – the answer came back: “*This is not the time or place to discuss that.*”

The time never arrived, the place was never found. The barricades had been built, the wagons had been circled and there was established “a cowardly trench of silence”. Nothing – and certainly not a canvass of the Alumni and the broader community – would stand in the road. Given the vision in the JUMP campaign literature of a unique blend of old and new buildings, Alumni had pledged with confidence and enthusiasm. Many now felt betrayed; there was mumbling about “misappropriation of funds.” Some have gone so far as to seek a legal opinion on this and other matters such as the “trust” due to the families of and donors to, this Military Memorial, THE Cenotaph at Mount Allison.

You will know, Mr. Chairman, that this issue of “trust” has been first and foremost in our minds from the beginning. We, too, have sought a legal opinion. Mr. E. J. Mockler has informed us that “*Mount Allison has an obligation to maintain the*

*Memorial Library”, and “that the University should refrain from making any award of a contract for demolition at this time”. We will provide the Chair with a copy of Mr. Mockler’s legal opinion.*

Those wishing to have their voices heard on this matter have been treated, by and large, as a nuisance. Common respect has been in short supply.

Some of you will know that I have, here at home in Sackville, a nonagenarian father who has devoted virtually all of his adult life to the service and well-being of this institution. He has desperately wanted his views to be heard.

With your indulgence, I’d like to quote from a letter he wrote to you, to alumni and to friends last March:

*“In 1989, Mount Allison considered my contribution to the university to be worthy of an honorary degree, an honour that I accepted with pride and humility. Now, a letter written expressing concerns and negative reaction to the proposed demolition of Memorial Library ... is apparently not considered even worthy of recognition of receipt. Therefore I have not had any answers to any of the questions I have posed, nor have I had any rebuttal to my arguments.*

*“It seems obvious that the ‘game plan’ is to ignore submissions and correspondence negative to the Administration’s proposal and thus civil discussion can not possibly occur.... Perhaps this is done with expectation that any protest of this decision will thus pass into oblivion.”*

To this day he has not received a response, other than a perfunctory e-mail message from the Office advising him only that the “*correct decision had been taken for the correct reason*” and then thanking him for “*his continuing interest in Mount Allison*”. An insult, and just one of many sad stories.

(Coates)

As we can all recognize – especially you folk with the responsibility for (*quote*) “*The management and control of the business and affairs of the University*” -- something has gone terribly wrong. The system of enlightened governance, with its checks and balances and respect for diversity, has been abandoned.

This demolition issue is not a simple matter of differences of opinion. It is, rather, a breakdown of respect for stakeholder input regarding the overall welfare of this unique place which means so much to all of us.

What could well and profitably have been an exciting exercise in consensus-building turned increasingly into an ‘us vs. them’ scenario. ‘If we put a high enough price on the inclusion of the Memorial Library in a blended building, they might go away’. It

started at two million dollars, went to 2.4 million, then to 3 million, then, finally to 5 million extra.

The Administration word went out: 'Don't talk to us unless you have 5 million dollars in your pocket. That's what it will take to save the Library'.

Somehow the Total Cost – listed in the JUMP brochure as 12 million – skyrocketed to 30 million or more, with a large chunk of it budgeted to come from the operating budget -- badly needed for other purposes and pushing up student costs. Even though the extra cost may have been 5 million dollars – though that, to our knowledge, was never publicly accounted for – we know there was a good possibility of funds from Alumni and other donor sources.

We have had communication with many generous and long-contributing Allisonians from around the world. One writes and I quote:

*“Many Alumni and Friends of Mount Allison have shown support for preserving and restoring Memorial Library via calls and conversations, letters written and signatures and notes added to the online petition to Save the Mt A Memorial Library where there are now more than 1500 names. On first learning that it was an issue of cost that would prevent the restoration of Memorial Library from happening I decided to offer a substantial sum to the university to assist with overcoming the deficit said to be needed to retain the building. This offer was declined and I was told: ‘It is not about the money. It is about much more’. I have had no satisfactory explanation for what is ‘much more’.*

*“It is my understanding that other concerned and generous Alumni and Friends have offered to support a project that would restore Memorial Library and that the preference is for our Mt A War Memorial to become the site for a University Archives. I am now offering to pledge a donation directly to the Save the MAML Committee in support of their laudable efforts to preserve Memorial Library in this way so that this Cenotaph may continue to honour those it remembers.”*

With that hopeful thought in mind the word we now have is “it's more than just the money”!!

(Cameron)

Well, what is the “more”? The target keeps moving, the evasion tactics continue. Those hundreds, perhaps thousands, we represent -- who love this place with a passion -- are tilting at windmills. They're crying for transparency. They're looking for a 'place at the table' where they can re-establish their trust – for an acknowledgement that they and their faithfulness matter in the larger scheme of things.

Were they all here before you we'd have to move the meeting to an overflowing Convocation Hall. We think you'd love the debate. You'd leave – perhaps after a couple of days! – with a warm feeling about the passions, concerns, commitments, and just plain caring expressed for the past and future of this university.

They would ask a multitude of fascinating questions that would no doubt draw, from the Board and Administration, many fascinating answers. You may well have asked them yourselves from time to time:

- Who's in charge? How does the governance work?
- Because of its value to the University why wasn't this building already protected?
- Why was the University not pleased to accept 'Provincial Heritage Place Designation' for the Memorial Library?
- Why and how did they convince the Minister to withdraw his intention to designate this as an 'Official New Brunswick Heritage Place'?
- Why were we promised a blend or a restoration and we're now looking at a demolition?
- Why is it to be torn down now, months ahead of the original schedule?
- We know that 4 sites were considered for the Memorial Library, how many were considered for the new Arts building?
- Why were they rejected?
- How was the architect chosen?
- What was the design mandate?
- Why did a world-renowned architect advise a blended building, possibly at a lower cost?
- What accounts for the 250% increase in costs, from 12 to over 30 million dollars?
- How does one justify the demolition of a War Memorial, especially when so many young Allisonians sacrificed their lives?
- How does one justify breaking "the trust" with those families and friends who gave so generously?
- Have the Sobeys been informed that their donation toward the 'Sobey School of Fine Art' will be associated with the demolition of an architecturally important heritage building and War Memorial?

- If we had 5 million dollars in our pocket would the Memorial Library be saved?
- Or, is it 'more than just the money'?

You know the questions as well as we do. Transparent and honest answers would go a long way in starting the healing process in a wounded community.

(Coates)

In the brief time that you've allowed, we hope that we've begun to do justice to the concerns of our colleagues and constituents. We, together, – Board, Administration, Faculty, Alumni, Students, Friends, Townsfolk -- need the time and a process whereby we can start anew... to be open, to be non-confrontational, to explore options, and then to reach a consensus as to how we can all have our pride in this place confirmed and renewed.

As you should certainly know by now – as the author was assured it would get to you from the Administration -- one of the plans on the table comes from one of our most gifted Alumni, and a member of the Alumni Board of Directors.

It is not too late – we stand ready to assist, and we pray, in the manner of the old-time Methodist founders of Mount Allison -- that you will be courageous in your deliberations.

Thank you for your patience and for your indulgence. I'd like to bring to your attention some recent documentation to add to the large amount that you have already received regarding Memorial Library:

- On your computers and blackberries this morning you will have received a message with a letter attached from renowned Canadian actor Mr. R. H. Thomson. It is recommended reading. [A]
- You should by now have received from Centennial Hall:
  1. a letter from internationally recognized Mt A artist Tom Forrestall. [B]
  2. the previously mentioned letter from a gifted alumnus laying out a plan of action. [C]
  3. a letter from L. Patricia (Saunders) McKinna (Mt A '45 and '49) [D]

I would like to ask Jean to now read a note given to her by her father, Dr. Donald A. Cameron just as she was leaving to come to Sackville.

(Cameron)

Thank you Bruce.

I was at the Cameron family farm in Nova Scotia earlier this week. My parents happened also to be there.

My elderly father, who many of you know well, has spent many hours writing and rewriting drafts of letters to send to you all on the subject of Memorial Library. This past week he spent most of Tuesday writing another letter to you. He spent much of Wednesday rewriting another draft. Finally, he gave this to me (a two page hand written letter was held up and shown). He pleaded with me to type it for him and deliver it to you all. Sadly, I honestly had to tell him that I was just not going to be able to do that.

As I was going out the door to come to Sackville, he handed me this (another hand written scrawl was held up for all to see) and he pleaded with me to at least read this. I agreed.

My father's message to you says:

"Memorial Library can still be saved.

"We now know that the major donor for a new Fine and Performing Arts Centre had nothing to do with the proposed site selection and was not informed that a War Memorial was to be destroyed to make way for a new centre which would bear the donor's family name. The family spokesperson has indicated that they will be happy for a solution that will respect and honour Memorial Library and still allow for other options for the Arts on campus.

"So, the decision to destroy Memorial Library was internal, administratively conceived, promoted and presented to the Board of Regents for adoption.

"Yes, Memorial Library can be saved. All that is required is for Board members to show courage, to respect the courage of Allisonians who died on their behalf, and to declare that Memorial Library is to remain and be restored for appropriate use.

"Strong opposition could be expected from the Administration for such a change (of course). If a War Memorial Building is destroyed it will be forever on the conscience of any Board member who supports demolition. Suggestions of resignations from administrators, if their wishes for demolition are not endorsed, will only underline that they are not worthy to be administrators of Mount Allison."

Donald A. Cameron

B.Sc., Class '50, LLD Memorial '79, LLD Mount Allison '89, Registrar Emeritus, Long-time Secretary to the Board of Regents, Former Board of Regents Member, One-time Honorary President of the Federated Alumni

*The note handed to daughter, Dr. C, Jean Cameron, as she left to go to the Sept 23, 11 Mt A Regent's Meeting with a plea to her to have it read to the Regents for their consideration.*

World War I ended at the 11 hour of the 11 day of the 11 month in 1918.

Only two weeks later on 26 Nov 1918 this was penned into the Mount Allison Board minutes by your Regent Predecessors:

*“Moved by Dr. Wigle, seconded by Rev. A S Rogers, that this Board most heartily endorses the proposition of erecting a Library Building as a War Memorial in honor of Mount Allison students who have made the supreme sacrifice in behalf of our country”. [Minutes of the Mt A Board of Regents, 26 Nov. 1918.]*

The Alumni, the Alumnae and the Methodist Clergy organized the fundraising.

Fast forward to 23 September 2011.

In front of you stands Bruce Coates, who can be said to represent the Alumni. I am honoured to be here on behalf of Mount Allison Alumnae. Missing – the Methodist effort ~ ~ but no, not quite... in front of me is one of the old Methodist collection plates used for that fundraising. *(A Methodist collection plate from one of Tantramar's oldest Methodist churches was placed on the table.)*

I ask you now to open the envelopes you have been given.

Take out what you find there and read the reminder printed there on.

*(In each envelope there was a \$10 Canadian Bill.. We invite each of you who are reading this to pause a moment and look in your own wallets and take out and examine a \$10 bill.)*

Each of you should now have a Canadian \$10 in your hand.

Recall that McCrae's lines were penned after “*nightmare days*” - the “*Seventeen days of Hades*” of the 2nd Battle of Ypres in Flanders - during which time, he wrote to his mother:

*“For seventeen days and seventeen nights none of us have had our clothes off, nor our boots even, except occasionally...gunfire and rifle fire never ceased for sixty seconds... And behind it all was the constant background of the sights of the dead, the wounded, the maimed, and a terrible anxiety lest the line should give way”. (Prescott: In Flanders Fields: The Story of John McCrae, p. 98)”*

McCrae had paused briefly, close to the Canal de l'Yser, by the graveside of his friend, Lieut. Alexis Helmer of Ottawa, killed by a shell burst on 2 May 1915, whom he had buried the day before in the absence of the presence of a chaplain.



My own grandfather, Rev. Captain George Farquhar, was one of the Canadian chaplains who saw action at Ypres. McCrae was a medic; his usual job was to tend to the injured, not bury the dead. That was the job of the Chaplain officers like Farquhar. Grampa described to his grandchildren some his war experience. He knew that there would come a day when there would be no one left from those that fought in the Great War to tell the stories. He wanted his children to know, so that they could pass on the importance of that Cause. During the War it was the job of chaplains like my grandfather to take down the last words of the dying, of the soldier so mortally injured that they would never make it back to the medical tents behind the lines. In the evenings he wrote letters to the families back home of the lads to whom he had said a last good-bye so that they would know of those dying words and wishes. He buried the dead. The reason that McCrae was called upon to do that duty for this good friend and compatriot, Helmer, was because the officer chaplains like my grandfather were then further out on the front lines.

NCO Cyril Allison, to whom McCrae handed the page on which he had scrawled, said that the words were *“an exact description of the scene in front of us both.”*

Tormented by the anguish he had witnessed, McCrae scribbled an admonishment to us who are fortunate to see sunrises: *“To you from failing hands, we throw / The torch; be yours to hold it high. / If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow In Flanders fields...”*

Those \$10 bills were given to me just before I left Nova Scotia to be used toward the effort to restore Memorial Library.

So, I am now going to pass the Methodist collection plate and ask each of you to put in those contributions to saving this valuable heritage building at Mount Allison.

*(At this point the Chair, Mr. McCubbin interjected that he would not permit us to pass the plate. I therefore spoke Regent Dr. Andrew Grant, sitting to my left, and requested that he should insure at the end of the meeting that all those \$10 bills would be collected and returned to me to be held in trust by me for the purpose of the Cause of the restoration of Memorial Library as directed by the donor.)*

Allisonian Regents:

Please do what McCrae implored and allow those that lie in Flanders and other Commonwealth War Grave Sites – and those who have no known grave - inclusive of the Allisonians amongst them from all conflicts represented in the Memorial Library - *“to rest in peace”*.

When you do your voting today, please allow for R. W. Lillard’s words to ring true:

*“...Fear not that you have died for naught, / The torch ye threw to us we caught...”*

**Thank you.**