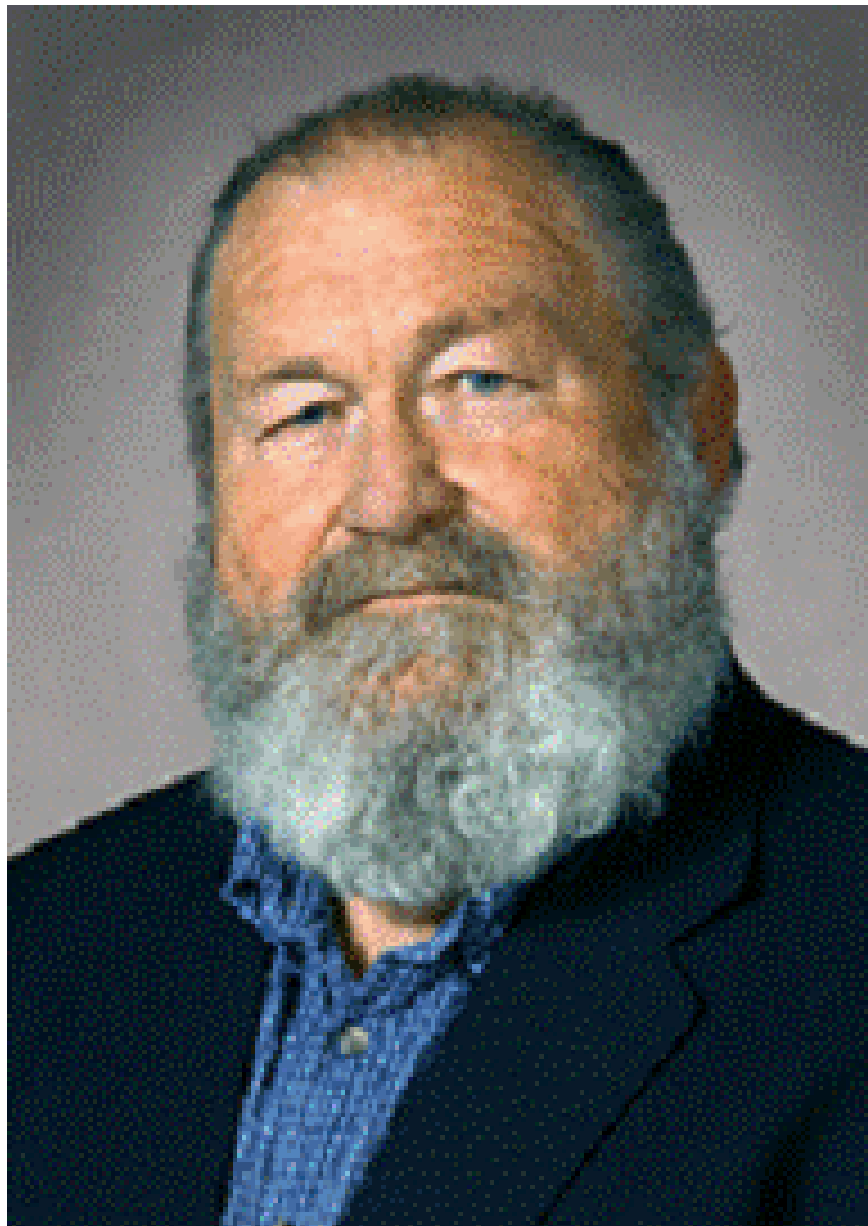


EDWARD GRABB

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**James Ensign Curtis**  
**1942-2005**



James Ensign Curtis passed away on May 27, 2005 at the age of 63. On that day, Jim was at work in the Sociology Department at the University of Waterloo, doing what he did so well, in the place that he called home for 35 years. Jim was born on April 30, 1942 in Mount Cisco, New York, but moved to Canada while he was still a young boy, growing up on a small Quebec farm. Jim began his university studies at Sir George Williams University in Montreal, completing his BA in 1966, and being awarded the Birks Medal as the first-ranked undergraduate. He held both a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and a Canada Council Fellowship during his graduate studies at Central Michigan University and Cornell University. In 1970, Jim moved on to Waterloo, where he began his distinguished academic career.

It has been said that modest people sometimes have much to be modest about, but Jim was a humble man of truly stunning accomplishments. Book projects were not his first love, and yet Jim co-authored five monographs, while also co-editing 15 other volumes. These works address such wide ranging topics as the Sociology of Knowledge, Social Inequality, Social Problems, the Sociology of Sport, and Comparative Social Structure. As a writer of research papers, Jim was virtually without peer in Canada. He published some 100 hundred articles and 40 chapters in books. These works cover the gamut of the social sciences, appearing not only in the leading Canadian and American Sociology journals, but also in some of the most prominent journals in Political Science, Behavioural Science, Sport Science, Aging, Social Psychology, Social Philosophy, Religion, Gender Roles, International Development, and other fields. Jim's expertise was so impressive in so many areas that it is difficult to focus on only a few of them. However, in Sociology, he may be best remembered for his research on social inequality, his work on the social significance of sport, and his studies comparing Canada with other countries. Jim was especially well known for his cross-national studies of voluntary association activity. One reviewer of his work, Professor John Wilson of Duke University, described Jim Curtis as "the foremost researcher in the world" in the study of cross-national patterns of voluntary association involvement, noting that Jim "largely pioneered" this area of study with his 1971 article in the *American Sociological Review*, and adding that his most recent publications on voluntary activity were "the gold standard" on the subject.

Jim was a renowned figure in Canadian Sociology, certainly one of the best sociologists that this country has yet produced. Indeed, I can think of no others who surpassed Jim in both the quantity and the quality of their work, or who were more masterful in their breadth of knowledge and their depth of understanding about our field. Jim also had a rare capacity to work with people of diverse backgrounds and interests, including many students. More than 30 of his students published research papers with Jim. He was also an advisor or committee member on 150 graduate theses, or almost five per year for his entire academic career. I know of no other academic who gave more generously of themselves, or who helped to launch the careers of so many young scholars.

Jim was always in demand to contribute to the academic community. He was the Chair or Associate Chair of Sociology at Waterloo on several occasions and worked on numerous university-wide committees over the years. He held joint or adjunct appointments in other departments at Waterloo, and also at the University of Guelph and Wilfrid Laurier University. Jim was an outstanding Editor of the *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, and for many years acted as an Associate Editor for the *Review*, the *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, and other journals. His past contributions also included serving as Vice-President of the Canadian

Sociology and Anthropology Association. In recognition of these and other accomplishments, Jim received the Award for Outstanding Contributions to Canadian Sociology from the CSAA in 2000. The University of Waterloo honoured Jim with the Outstanding Performance Award in 2004, for his exceptional contributions to teaching and research. In 2004, Jim was admitted as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Apart from his eminence as a scholar, Jim Curtis was even more impressive as a human being. Words cannot capture the love and respect that so many individuals felt for Jim. Despite serious health problems during much of his life, he maintained a positive outlook that rubbed off on everyone around him. Jim was an ideal role model for his friends, his colleagues, and an entire generation of students. There can be no better example of someone who stayed focused on what really mattered—helping and supporting others, doing superb work, and conducting his entire life with courage and integrity.

Jim's first love was family—Penny, his wife and partner for more than 45 years, sons Jim, John, Joel, and Josh, daughters-in-laws Valery, Luanne, and Holly, grandchildren Jacob, Jack, Emma, and Luke, brother-in-law Richard, and sister Eileen. Hundreds of relatives and friends celebrated Jim's life at a most moving service on May 31, 2005. Close family friends, as well as long-time colleagues Ron Lambert, Lorne Tepperman, and myself, told many warm tales of Jim. Here, too, Holly Curtis spoke with a sweet eloquence and love for Jim that I will never forget. No one who knew him could ever forget James Ensign Curtis.

*Edward Grabb  
Professor of Sociology, University of British Columbia*

*(Author's title given as of the time of writing)*