

TORONTO STAR

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**Keith Yates**  
**1928-2006**



After a successful career as a chemistry professor at the University of Toronto, few would argue that Keith Yates wasn't an expert on molecules. But to those who knew him best, Yates was a man of many passions – including sports, politics, sociology and even naval warfare, a subject he wrote two books about after his retirement.

Born in the north of England on Oct. 22, 1928, Yates was raised in Blackpool. In 1946, he began a two-year conscription in Britain's Royal Navy. In 1948, as he approached the end of his naval requirements, he received a letter from his parents informing him they had moved to British Columbia, and that he was welcome to join them.

For the next few years, Yates worked blue-collar jobs for Coca-Cola and a local electrical company, but didn't pursue an academic career. It wasn't until 1953 that he started to move down that road, with help from his new wife, June Charter. In the following years, Charter would bring home the couple's only source of income as a teacher while Yates worked toward a bachelor's degree and a medical science degree at the University of British Columbia, and then a PhD at Oxford University in England.

In 1968, Yates began his career in physical organic chemistry as a professor at UofT. A short six years later, he was chairman of the department. As a physical organic chemist, Yates studied the reasons molecules responded to each other in the way that they did. Considered an authority in the field, Yates wrote more than 150 articles and other published works. Perhaps his best known, a 1978 book entitled *Huckel Molecular Orbital Theory*, discussed an alternative theory to predict where an electron could be found in certain molecules. Acclaimed by his peers, McClelland says the book is still used as a textbook in some universities.

Yates was given a prestigious award by the Chemical Institute of Canada in 1991. After retiring that same year, Yates moved back to B.C. with his wife, devoting his time to writing a pair of books on naval history and running the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Yates leaves his wife of 53 years, as well as three daughters and four grandchildren.

*Published in Toronto Star  
December 26, 2006*