

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

UPON MY FATHER'S UNEXPECTED DEATH IN MAY 2015, HIS FIVE children—Lucy, Leslie, Meaghan, Amy, and myself—faced the disheartening task of clearing out his house in Old Ottawa South, a short walk from the campus of his beloved Carleton University, in Canada's capital city, where he was born.

Abundant evidence of Professor Emeritus T. Joseph Scanlon's parallel careers in journalism and disaster research was spread throughout his house, on every floor, in every cupboard, on every shelf and flat surface. There were books, periodicals, papers, police-style notepads, floppy discs, laptop computers, printed emails and PowerPoint presentations, a desktop computer, videotapes, slides, and photographs.

In the late 1980s, my father spent a year as visiting professor at the Disaster Research Center, University of Delaware. He had retained close ties, so we let the centre know his collection was sorted and packed into copious boxes. Patricia Young, the resource collection coordinator, was quick to confirm the DRC wanted all of the disaster-related contents of his collection. Under Pat's care, his collection was curated and added to the E.L. (Henry) Quarantelli Resource Collection. A pioneer in disaster research, co-founder of the DRC, and fellow awardee of the Charles E. Fritz Award for Career Contributions to Disaster Research, Henry was a friend and mentor of my father's—our father would have been humbled by the DRC's response.

Early on, I worried about what to do with my father's magnum opus—his unpublished book on the Halifax explosion. The first challenge was to access the manuscript on an encrypted laptop. Cousin Justin Scanlon, the family IT guru, scoured the house for clues and, miraculously, found the password (which included "Carleton") on a dog-eared Post-it note.

A workaholic, a voracious reader, and a relentlessly curious researcher, in time my father became distracted by endless other projects, as well as his many speaking engagements on disaster and the conferences he attended around the world. He was also investing more time with his five children and

nine grandchildren. And he was enjoying his time with his British partner, Kathleen Quinn—they alternated between England and Canada. He belonged to golf clubs in both countries and, to “stimulate the brain,” had become part owner of a semi-professional football (soccer) club in Kingston, Ontario (the city where he died after his morning workout).

As I was working overseas for NATO when he died, I set aside the manuscript until my return to Canada (and retirement) in the fall of 2016. Shortly after my return, my sister Amy was contacted by Brenda Murphy, a professor at Wilfrid Laurier University and then secretary of the Canadian Risk Hazards Network. We were thrilled to learn from Brenda that CRHNet was planning to award their inaugural lifetime achievement award to our father and, subsequently, intended to rename it the Joe Scanlon Lifetime Achievement Award. My sister Leslie, who had served on our father’s Emergency Communications Response Unit while a Carleton journalism student, represented the siblings at the CRHNet conference. During her remarks, she mentioned our father’s unpublished book—and promptly received a chorus of support from Brenda and other CRHNet members to see the book published.

Brenda kindly pitched the book to Dr. Mike Bechthold, an editor at Wilfrid Laurier University Press. Mike read the manuscript, concluded it would be an invaluable contribution to the disaster literature, and arranged to have it sent out for peer review. But there was a hitch. Although the book had a detailed sources annex, Mike observed it did not have in-text citations—considered *de rigueur* in publications from scholarly presses. My father had published hundreds of articles in academic journals and textbooks, so his omission of citations was surprising. I could only conclude he intended to publish a popular account of the explosion, with a view to making disaster theory, corroborated by compelling first-hand accounts, accessible to a wide audience.

When Mike left WLUP he handed the project over to senior editor Siobhan McMenemy, who diligently pursued the peer review. Despite the lack of citations, the peer reviews were highly positive. While awaiting the conclusion of the peer review, I began work on consolidating, copy-editing, and fact-checking the manuscript.

Early on, I was lucky to come into contact with Barry Cahill, who was involved with the Halifax Explosion 100th Anniversary Advisory Committee. An independent historian, Barry knew my father and believed strongly that the book should be published. Barry, who has written about the Halifax Relief Commission,¹ took on the Herculean challenge of fact-checking and, later, indexing the manuscript. Additionally, he brought the bibliography largely up to date, adding many new books released by the time of the explosion’s hundredth anniversary.

Barry also connected me with Alan Ruffman, a marine biologist affiliated with Dalhousie University and long-time student of the explosion. Alan was co-editor of *Ground Zero*² and knew my father and his work well. Along with cheerleading for the book, Alan pointed me to Captain Robert Power to advise on the “Why It Happened” chapter.

A veteran Halifax harbour pilot and maritime expert on the explosion, Robert wrote me: “I think [your] father had a reasonable idea of what took place but there are a few confusing items in what he has written.” Within a few weeks, Robert generously provided a detailed critical analysis of the “Why” chapter.

For me, that chapter was the most challenging one to edit. I found my father’s explanation inconsistent with nautical elements. Yet it was clear that by piecing together the eyewitness testimony he had divined a persuasive new theory of how the fateful events unfolded. I did my best to preserve my father’s explanation while holding to Robert’s technical feedback.

Many other people played key roles in helping to improve the manuscript. Independent researcher Mike Constandy scoured US national archives in the Washington, DC, area. Brian Hill, a researcher in St John’s who was referred by Alan Ruffman, examined shipping records there. East-coast marine geologist Gordon Fader’s detailed knowledge of the Narrows seabed help me put to rest some misconceptions. Professor Emeritus Don Wiles, a colleague of my father’s at Carleton University, found a key family document.

Garry Shutlak and his team at Nova Scotia Archives helped me out, as did Shannon Baxter at the Dartmouth Heritage Museum and Amber Laurie at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. Kim McKeithan at the National Archives in Washington, DC, and Jeanie Smith at Guildhall Library in London went out of their way to point me in the right direction.

My wife, Alanna Scanlon, chased down imagery and related permissions—with the helpful support of Jessica Kilford at Nova Scotia Archives, Amber Laurie (again) at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Anna MacNeil at the Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University, and Kelsey Sawyer with the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at the New England Historic Genealogical Society. My sister Meaghan, a librarian at Library and Archives Canada, tracked down valuable naval intelligence reports.

My father had a large framed photo of a painting of SS *IMO* hanging in his living room, which I learned was linked to Sigurd Hunstok, a sailor who had been blown free of *IMO* during the explosion and who ultimately lost an arm. Sigurd Oie, a Norwegian journalist with *Sandefjords Blad*, connected me with Sigurd Hunstok’s grandson, Per, and shared a wonderful photograph of Per holding the painting of *IMO*.

The copy hung in my father's living room until his death and now resides in my home. Per visited Halifax around the time of the hundredth anniversary and donated some items to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic.

Finally, and most fortunately, one of the people who reviewed the unfinished manuscript was Professor Roger Sarty, of Wilfrid Laurier University. Roger is a well-known naval historian with roots in my world at the Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence. He recognized the value of the manuscript, despite its lack of citations, and agreed to become the scholarly editor. He added vital context with his meticulous historical introduction, and he exhaustively researched, corrected, validated, and improved many elements of the book.

I cannot overstate the difficulty Roger and all of us faced in finalizing the manuscript without access to the original author, my father. Lacking his counsel, we did our utmost to preserve his meaning while correcting obvious errors and clarifying language we found unclear. His authoritative reflections on disaster theory remain untouched, but many other parts were substantially improved, in large measure thanks to Roger. On behalf of the estate, I accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

In sum, without Brenda Murphy's push, Mike Bechthold's conviction, Barry Cahill's detailed fact-checking, Alan Ruffman's encouragement, Robert Power's expert input, Siobhan McMenemy's persistence, and above all Roger Sarty's extensive personal investment of time, this book would not have been published.

In memory of my father, and on behalf of my four sisters,
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