



Photo courtesy Edward Dahl

Gilles Langelier, 1947-1991

Gilles Langelier, Cartographic and Audio-Visual Archives Division, Cartographic and Architectural Sector, National Archives of Canada, died on 13 November 1991, following a long battle with cancer.

Born at Saint-Pascal-de-Kamouraska, P.Q., Gilles completed his college and undergraduate studies at Collège Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière near his home village. In 1971 he obtained his M.A. in History from the University of Ottawa.

In 1972 Gilles joined the staff of the National Archives of Canada, working first in the departmental library and soon moving to the Cartographic and Architectural Archives Division, where he stayed to the end.

He had a simple though rich career, simple in that his work was always related to the same medium, rich because throughout the years he interested himself in every aspect of cartographic archives, contributing his dedication and eagerness. After nineteen years he was still able to marvel at the beauty of the records and their usefulness to research. Discreet and attentive, clear-sighted and demanding, persevering, sensitive to the needs of researchers, disappointed sometimes but never defeated whenever technology failed, his aim was quality and work well-done, never seeking honours for himself.

Since 1976 Gilles had been Chief, Services Section, and as such was responsible for collections management, cataloguing, and researcher assistance. His most notable achievement was the setting up in 1976 of the 105 mm microfilming programme. For the first time, cartographic and architectural records were reproduced in a way that did justice to them, enabling high quality reprography, and making possible the withdrawal of the originals from daily circulation, since the microfiche showed almost every detail. Conservation was thus immensely improved. Gilles had set the quality controls of the programme, established the microfilming rules and recommended the purchase of state-

of-the-art equipment. The microfilming programme greatly influenced the development of the Division and had far-reaching beneficial consequences for almost every map library and archives in Canada.

It was also Gilles who in 1985 wrote the general guide *National Map Collection* (the Division's former name), a very considerable task given the breadth and complexity of the divisional responsibilities. He succeeded in producing an excellent guide which has been used daily since its publication.

Although his management duties kept him very busy, Gilles always remained in touch with the researchers. He liked to meet with them, discuss their subjects, recommend the consultation of this or that little-known document. Users, whether their enquiries were very basic or complex, could always expect full assistance and dedication from him in finding the records that best suited their needs. Testimonies to this are numerous.

If his Division was very important to Gilles, he was also devoted to working with the whole of Canada's cartographic community. In particular, he was very active in the Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives; he was a member and chair of the Copyright Committee since 1977, and organized several map redistribution sessions. Members knew of Gilles's deep commitment as an individual and a representative of a national institution to cooperate with all of them. The Association des Archivistes du Québec, the Society of American Archivists, the Special Libraries Association, the Association Québécoise de Cartographie and IFLA, also had the opportunity to benefit from Gilles's contribution.

In the National Archives of Canada Gilles was a colleague highly esteemed by all. For many he was also a friend, and they liked his rich human qualities of gentleness, directness, courage, love of life and beauty. There was something warm and soft in his presence which was also reflected in his smile, discreet and positive.

Two years ago Gilles began his battle with cancer. After his first major surgery he seemed to have achieved a victory. This was a premature conclusion, last winter the illness returned. There was a respite, momentarily restoring a healthy look and strength, enabling him to represent the National Archives of Canada at the three-month-long annual Stage Technique International d'Archives given by the Archives Nationales de France in Paris last April to June. This was a unique experience for Gilles, in which he participated fully, in a short time winning the admiration and friendship of his colleagues at the course. However, to the consternation of everyone, cancer struck again just a few days after his return, taking his life after four months of a stoic but determined fight.

His wife and two children, his relatives and friends all admired his courage and simplicity in facing death.

His colleagues deeply regret the departure of a person whom everyone appreciated and respected as much for his professional as for his admirable personal qualities. He will be greatly missed.

Louis Cardinal
National Archives of Canada