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ROBERT REFORD, DISARMAMENT ADVOCATE 1921-2006

Writer and former intelligence officer was a 'consummate gentleman' who believed in peaceful solutions to international conflicts, writes SANDRA MARTIN

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A valiant proponent of nuclear disarmament, Robert William Reford, a member of the Quebec shipping and gardening family, was a journalist, researcher and the author of *Canada and Three Crises*, a study of foreign policy with regard to conflicts in Cuba, China and Suez, among other works.

The son of a soldier, he came of age during the Second World War, but Mr. Reford rejected military conflict as a foreign-policy initiative. He was part of the postwar community that advocated multilateralism, peaceful solutions to international conflicts, strategic planning, and public debate.

"He was always thinking not only about Canada's place in the world, but the state of the world and how Canada needed to relate to it," said Douglas Roche, Canadian ambassador on disarmament at the United Nations from 1984 to 1989 in Brian Mulroney's government. Describing Mr. Reford as "gentle, erudite and a consummate gentleman," Mr. Roche said: "He brought out the best in everyone because he was such a gentleman himself. You had to respond accordingly in your discourse with him."

Robert (Bob) Reford was born in London, the eldest of three children of Bruce Reford, a decorated soldier from the First World War, and his wife Evelyn Reford (née MacInnes). Originally, the Refords came from County Antrim in Ulster. According to Bob Reford's unpublished memoirs, his great-great-grandfather, Joseph Reford, was a gambler. Having lost the family property in a game of cards -- he apparently sat with his back to a mirror, which enabled his opponents to read his hand in the reflection -- he then succumbed to tuberculosis.

In the spring of 1845, just before the potato blight caused a devastating famine in Ireland, his widow emigrated to Canada and settled in Toronto with her children. Her third son Robert turned out to be a business whiz. He began as an apprentice in the wholesale grocery business and soon moved to Montreal and began importing goods, especially rice, from the West Indies, China and Japan. The Robert Reford Company invested in sailing ships, including the *Thermopylae*, said to be the fastest clipper ever built, and from 1911 to 1945 acted as agents for the Cunard Line and later the White Star Line. The Robert Reford Company, which remains active in the shipping and rice businesses, still has its headquarters in Montreal and is the oldest shipping agency in the country.

The third Robert Reford married Elsie Stephen Meighen, a second cousin to Prime Minister Arthur Meighen, and niece of George Stephen (later Lord Mount Stephen) the first president of the Canadian Pacific Railway. He left her his salmon-fishing river and lodge at Métis on the St. Lawrence in the Gaspé area of Quebec. It was on this property in 1926 that she began planning and planting the sumptuous Reford Gardens that were designated a historic site in 1996.

Her son, Bruce Reford declined to go into the family business. He was doing a degree at Oxford when war broke out in 1914. He enlisted in the British army, served in France, won the Military Cross for gallantry and became a career soldier in the Irish Guards, eventually reaching the rank of brigadier in the Second World War. "He may also have wanted to put 3,000 miles between himself and his mother because of her dominating personality," suggested his son Bob Reford in his unpublished memoirs. On leave in Canada after the war, he met Evelyn MacInnes and they married in June, 1920, and went to England to live.

That was why Bob Reford and his younger sister Maryon (born in 1923) and brother Michael (1926) grew up in England and went to Canada every two years to spend the summer months with their grandparents. Bob, the product of an upper-middle-class English upbringing, went to boarding school when he was 8, at a preparatory school called The New Beacon, followed by Winchester College. Although he never gardened on the scale of his grandmother Elsie, he did develop a fascination for wild orchids at Winchester and gave his first public lecture at the school's Natural History Society on the subject of "Collecting Flowers." On school vacations in Canada in 1937 and 1938, he found a number of wild orchids in the Métis area and proudly showed them to his grandmother who had been "quite unaware" of them. He graduated from Winchester in March, 1939, and went up to Oxford in the autumn, but dropped out to enlist in his father's regiment, the Irish Guards, in 1940.

He was a member of the British forces that landed in Normandy on June 23, 1944 (D-Day plus 17). By then, the fighting had moved several miles inland. An intelligence officer, he served in France and Germany before being shipped to Southeast Asia in June, 1945, where he served mainly as a counter-intelligence officer in Malaya with the rank of captain until August, 1946, when he returned to England and was demobilized.

An inch shorter than his father's towering 6-feet-6, he was also the eldest son of an eldest son. He and his father shared a

disaffection for the family shipping business. Otherwise, they were very different. Although Bob Reford willingly served in the army for six years during the war, he didn't like soldiering. He was fascinated by political intelligence and considered joining the British Secret Service. His grandmother Reford wanted him to resume his studies at Oxford and offered to foot the bills, but he wanted to get on with his life and he declined. Instead, he flew to Montreal to "renew family relationships and to explore career prospects."

At 25, he felt he was too old to go back to university and sit in classrooms, having seen the world and served in various parts of the British Empire during the war, said his nephew Alexander Reford. His lack of a degree prevented him from becoming a diplomat, which was "one of his disappointments," said Mr. Reford. "He was a degreeless intellectual, which is sometimes a difficult position to be in."

A Reford uncle introduced him to Bob Keyserlingk, head of the British United Press news agency, and he began work as a journalist in February, 1947. In his memoirs he described non-fiction writers as falling generally into two categories: "Either they wish to inform, or they are critics or advocates of a certain point of view." He considered his purpose was to inform, "to provide information on which others can formulate whatever position they choose."

After BUP, he headed the Ottawa office of Radio Canada International, worked as an editorial writer for the Ottawa Citizen and later served as a United Nations correspondent for Canadian newspapers. In 1952, he married Ginger Gilbert. Their marriage broke down and they were divorced in the early 1970s.

By then, Mr. Reford was living in New York and working at the UN as special assistant to the director of the Institute for Training and Research. That's where he met Stephanie McCandless. He was a research officer, she was a training officer.

They were both internationalists, both newcomers, and they met in an elevator across the street from the main UN building. "He was the friendliest man in the place," she said. They began as colleagues and friends and married two years later, after he was offered a job in Toronto as executive director of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs under the late John Holmes. The couple settled in the Cabbagetown area of Toronto.

After Mr. Reford retired from the CIIA in 1978, he and Ms. McCandless Reford opened a consultancy and developed a teaching initiative with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education to promote the study of world affairs in schools in Canada and the United States. During the 1980s, he wrote and lectured widely on arms control and disarmament and Canadian foreign policy and served as president of the UN Association in Canada. He had a lifelong involvement in the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs and was a founding director of the Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament.

In 1988, he was appointed to the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board, where he served until his retirement in 1993. "It was his last career, and he loved it," his wife said. When the Refords retired to Nova Scotia, settling on the south shore near Lunenburg, he devoted another year to the CIRB in Halifax. He worked on his memoirs and enjoyed golf and bird watching until a stroke incapacitated him in 2001.

Robert William Reford was born in London on May 1, 1921. He died at home in Crescent Beach, Nova Scotia on May 9, a week after suffering a massive stroke following his 85th birthday party. He is survived by his second wife Stephanie, daughters Lisa and Sharon, two grandsons, two step- grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

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