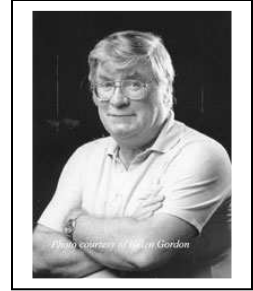


Donald R. Gordon

Donald Gordon was a respected journalist who lived a life of adventure as a young man, covering stories in Europe and Africa in the 1950s and '60s. In the final years of his writing career the echoes of his early adventures could be found in the children's stories he wrote, entitled *Prosperian Papers*.



After his death in 2006, the late writer was called a “larger-than-life character” who embodied courage, whimsy and generosity. Being a complex character, Gordon was also remembered as a “bad man to cross” who stood firm on his principles.

Gordon, who was born in Toronto in 1929, was the son of the president of the Canadian National Railway. He attended Queen's University and the University of Toronto. During his time at Queen's, he met a young medical student and in 1952 they married. Helen Gordon went on to become an anaesthesiologist and president of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Gordon worked as a freelance journalist to save money to study at the prestigious London School of Economics in Britain.

He interrupted his studies there for a chance to cover the Suez Crisis as a freelance journalist in 1956. With the crisis over, Gordon returned to London and in 1957 began his work as a foreign correspondent for the CBC. He was known for his ground-breaking work as a radio and television correspondent in Europe and Africa; holding down the CBC post until 1963.

Upon returning to Canada, Gordon was in demand for his journalistic skills, serving on the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. He also worked as a media consultant for the Senate Committee on the Mass Media in Canada, and the Task Force on Government Information.

As a freelance writer, his work has appeared in a wide variety of publications including, *Macleans*, *Saturday Night*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Jerusalem Post* and the *Journal of Liberal Thought*.

He taught political science at the University of Alberta and in 1966 he was given a teaching position at the University of Waterloo. As an educator Gordon was ahead of his time, pushing for “media literacy” among teachers and students in the 1970s.

As the “leading soothsayer on things to come in communications,” Gordon wrote *Language Logic and the Mass Media* (1966) and *The New Literacy* (1971). He also hosted a program for TV Ontario called *Arts 100: The New Literacy*.

As an educator, Gordon was remembered for his unconventional approach - using newspaper articles, magazine features, video and film to instruct. He also regularly invited professionals like former CBC chairman Patrick Watson and respected arts critic David Silcox to speak to students. In addition to his classes at the university, Gordon also taught a course on freelance writing at the Waterloo Community Arts Centre.

His foray into fantasy writing for children happened late in his career while relaxing at a cottage with family. Gordon was ordered to keep the children busy one evening while dinner was being prepared. He gathered the children on the dock and regaled them with the story of *The Rock Candy Bandits* that he had quickly scribbled on the inside of a cigarette package.

That first story was published in 1984. He continued the stories and in the mid-1990s the *Prosperian Papers* were released in audio book form with Gordon reading the text. They are adventure stories filled with “mythical cities, kingdoms, heroes, villains, and beasts and creatures” – all in all a world not far from the one he wrote about as a journalist.

Photo courtesy of Helen Gordon