

Donahue designed churches, chaired Catholic school board

Joseph Hugh Donahue, a well-known Edmonton architect, social activist and Catholic trustee, died at the Broadmead Lodge in Victoria Oct. 17. He was 88.

Born in Sunny Brae, N.B., in 1922, the oldest of seven children, Donahue served in the Second World War and upon returning home entered McGill University. He received his degree in architecture and with his family moved to Edmonton in the mid-1950s.

He practised architecture in Edmonton for more than 30 years, designing several churches, including Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Sherwood Park, Our Lady of the Angels Church in Fort Saskatchewan and the original St. Thomas More and St. Charles churches in Edmonton. He also restored Sacred Heart Church in Edmonton following a fire.

Donahue was involved in the renovation of many churches following the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, including St. Anthony's, St. Agnes and the chapel of St. Joseph's College.

"He was a very prominent Catholic architect and very interested in the liturgy," said Redemptorist Father Ed Kennedy, who was on city council when Donahue was chair of the Catholic school board.

"I remember him as a man with a lot of imagination and very creative and very artistic and interested in the world. He was interested in the Church and was a man of great faith."

While serving as chair of the Catholic board in the late 1970s, Donahue described the Catholic education system as "equal to any and second to none anywhere."

He refused to call the district "separate." "I would much rather call it catholic in the sense of universal, because we have something distinct to offer to the whole



Joe Donahue (1974) Photo: Supplied

community, something different to contribute," he told the WCR in 1978.

An obituary in the Victoria Times Colonist said Donahue considered it a privilege to be able to participate in projects that made the world a better place.

During his 33 years in Edmonton, Donahue also served as president of Edmonton Citizens for Better Housing and president of the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

In 1988 he moved with his wife Ellie to Pender Island, B.C. "He loved Pender Island for its beauty, the peacefulness and the opportunity to share life with his dear friends," the obituary said.

Donahue served in leadership roles in many community organizations on the island.

His wife Ellie, seven children, 10 grandchildren and two great grandchildren survive Donahue.

A celebration of Donahue's life will be held at St. Peter's Anglican Church Hall on Pender Island Nov. 13. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to Broadmead Care Foundation 4579 Chatterton Way Victoria, BC V8X 4Y7.