



The Canadian
Accounting
Hall of Fame

Le Temple
de la renommée comptable
du Canada

JOHN R. ("JACK") HANNA – Inducted 2024



John Hanna, known to everyone as "Jack", grew up in Guelph, Ontario, and studied at McMaster University in Hamilton for a B.Comm. degree, where he won a medal for outstanding achievement in the Honours Commerce program. He then joined Clarkson, Gordon (now Ernst & Young, or "EY") in Hamilton as a student-in-accounts. He obtained his CA in 1961, and was transferred to the firm's Tax Department in Toronto.

A chance meeting of Jack with an EY partner, who was aware that McMaster needed a replacement for a professor going on sabbatical, led to a one-year contract as instructor. This academic experience excited Jack, but to pursue this career successfully he needed more education. With the support of his family he was accepted into the Paton School of Accounting at the University of Michigan, where he completed MBA and PhD degrees.

In 1966 Jack returned to McMaster, becoming a Professor of Accounting and Associate Dean in 1977. In the late '70s he became increasingly convinced that neither Ontario universities nor the CA profession would give entrants to the profession the grounding needed for a successful career in accounting.

To cut a long story short, on finding that McMaster was not receptive to his concerns, Jack sold his vision for a new approach to accounting education and training to senior administrators at the University of Waterloo, and persuaded six academic colleagues at McMaster - Len Eckel, Don Johnston, Duane Kennedy, Stan Laiken, Morley Lemon and Anthony Wesley - to move to a newly-established Centre for Accounting Research and Education (CARE) in the University of Waterloo's Faculty of Arts. One of those writing letters of support for Jack's Hall-of-Fame nomination described convincing several of his McMaster colleagues to leave secure, well-paid positions, and then attracting like-minded professors from other universities, as "... a 'coup' that

is still talked about today - nothing like that has been accomplished since". He added that Jack's vision for what the future of accounting at the university level should be was ".. visionary, far-reaching, bold, ambitious and path-breaking".

By 1980 an autonomous Accounting Group was formed at Waterloo, with the cohort from McMaster being supplemented by Jack's recruitment of several noted accounting teachers and researchers who had bought into Jack's vision of a School of Accountancy. This led to the establishment of a five-year co-op program: a four-year bachelor's degree with four co-op work terms, and an eight-month MAcc degree, after which the students would proceed directly to the CA profession's national Uniform Final Examination (UFE) without being required to attend the "summer school" run by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario. Several of these students concurrently completed the academic requirements for the Registered Industrial Accountant (subsequently changed to the Certified Management Accountant) designation of the Society of Management Accountants.

Jack's contagious enthusiasm for his vision enabled the School of Accountancy to attract not only noted faculty (including Tony Atkinson, Phelim Boyle, Gordon Richardson and Bill Scott) and newly-minted PhDs (Howard Armitage and Efrim Boritz) - three of these six being inductees into the Canadian Accounting Hall of Fame in its first three years, but also outstanding students. The calibre of students is shown by the results obtained by Waterloo alumni on the CA profession's Uniform Final Examinations (UFE): between 1983 and 2021 no fewer than 215 Waterloo alumni were on the National Honour Roll, with eight winning both the National and Ontario gold medals for top marks, and a further six winning just the Ontario gold medal. One gold medallist worked in the USA for a while after completing her CA and CMA studies in Canada, and wrote the US CPA examinations while there: she came first out of 62,000 writers!

The next major development in the School of Accountancy was the establishment of a PhD program in 1988, under the leadership of Bill Scott. A key objective of this program was to increase the supply of PhDs who would teach at Canadian universities, and so make progress towards addressing the extreme shortage of well-qualified professors. To date 53 PhDs have graduated from the program, about 90% of whom are teaching in Canada. However, there was a great need before the first PhDs emerged, so Jack persuaded some of the brightest of the early MAcc grads to become accounting professors, and at least ten went on to study at leading Canadian and US universities (including Stanford and Cornell); two of these - Ken Klassen and Christine Wiedman - returned to become faculty members at Waterloo, and these two are among the ten Waterloo faculty who have won the L. S. Rosen Outstanding Accounting Educator Award from the CAAA.

The faculty Jack recruited to Waterloo made very significant contributions to the CAAA. With regard to the CAAA's two journals, four Waterloo faculty have served as senior editors of *Contemporary Accounting Research*, and three faculty or PhD graduates have served as senior editors of *Accounting Perspectives*. One faculty member coordinated and edited the CAAA's history *CAAA: 25 Years of Progress*, published in 2001, and two have served as CAAA President.

Jack's own contributions to accounting scholarship included two papers on price-level accounting and alternative income models, four monographs on inflation accounting published by two of the predecessor bodies to CPA Canada, four monographs on core concepts of accounting information, and a co-authored text *Core Concepts of Accounting Information* that was used by several Canadian universities.

He was a visiting professor at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and at the Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Australia.

The four senior professors in the group who wrote letters to support Jack's nomination included three who specifically stated that he did more to change the face of Canadian accounting education than anyone else has done; two thought that this was equally true of his impact on Canadian accounting research.

Jack was recognized in three ways by the accounting profession:

- In 1978 he was designated a Fellow by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario - FCA, now FCPA.
- In 1986 he won the CAAA's L. S. Rosen Award for Outstanding Accounting Educator. (Jack was the first living professor to receive this Award, the two previous winners both having received it posthumously.)
- In 1996 he received the ICAO's Award of Outstanding Merit, for "conspicuous and sustained service to the profession". Jack was only the second professor to receive this Award, with just two more professors receiving it before the Award was discontinued in 2013, following the merger of the three accounting bodies. One of these two was Efrim Boritz, a 2023 CAHF inductee, and the other was Morley Lemon, both having been recruited to Waterloo by Jack.

Jack and his wife Cathy had seven children, one of whom, Doug, was a MAcc grad from Waterloo, and is now an accounting professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. Cathy died in 2011, and Jack subsequently married Wilma Peer.