

Culture



Richard Salisbury's Style: A Colleague Remembers

Dan R. Aronson

Volume 10, numéro 1, 1990

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1080927ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1080927ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASA),
formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne
d'Ethnologie

ISSN

0229-009X (imprimé)

2563-710X (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Aronson, D. (1990). Richard Salisbury's Style: A Colleague Remembers. *Culture*, 10(1), 8-9. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1080927ar>

Tous droits réservés © Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie, 1990

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

Érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

Il était avec Milt Freeman de ceux qui avaient la notoriété et la compétence nécessaires pour élaborer des règles déontologiques devant constituer les assises d'une éthique de l'action professionnelle. Je me souviens encore de ses propos de 1985 sur l'accréditation professionnelle qu'il ne voyait pas tellement comme un visa pour obtenir un poste sur le marché du travail mais comme une occasion toute désignée pour relever la qualité de la formation anthropologique et pour rehausser la réputation et la crédibilité de l'anthropologie. Ce leitmotiv de l'excellence qui traverse ses vues ici n'est pas une fleur de style. Il est, au contraire, le reflet d'une pratique et d'un vécu pleinement assumés à son enseigne. Dick est parti beaucoup trop tôt: son carnet était rempli de projets. La dernière fois que je l'ai vu, en décembre 1988 avec Gilles Bibeau, nous avons défini ensemble le con-

tenu d'un numéro spécial d'*Anthropologica* sur l'anthropologie au Québec. Son souvenir n'a pas fini de nous habiter et de nous inspirer, ceux de sa génération comme ses héritiers intellectuels.

RÉFÉRENCES

- LARUSIC, Ignatius
1979 *La négociation d'un mode de vie*, Montréal, SSDCC Inc.
- SALISBURY, Richard F.,
1962 *From Stone to Steel: Economic Consequences of a Technological Change in New Guinea*, Melbourne and Cambridge, The University Presses.
- 1986 *A Homeland for the Cree: Regional Development in James Bay 1971-1981*, Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press

Richard Salisbury's Style: A Colleague Remembers

Dan R. Aronson
McGill University

For many of us it was especially Richard Salisbury's style of professional work that most marked his uniqueness. Perhaps the origins of that style derived from an area of his life that few of us knew much about, even though he displayed its souvenirs in his office. The Royal Marines, which he joined just after the Second World War ended, was where he began learning the economics that would serve him so well in his anthropological research. But it was also where he flourished in a brief career he had begun at school, a career as a boxer. Dick was the Marine Officers' heavyweight champion in 1947, its light heavyweight champion in 1948. He went on to earn his Blue at Cambridge— what we would call his varsity letter — and also fought with the prestigious Belsize Boxing Club from 1949-1951. He lost his final fight to Bombardier Smith, who went on to win the Olympic light-heavyweight medal the following year. Dick's overall record was about 28 wins in about 40 fights, ten by knock-outs. Although his medals were in his office at McGill, apparently few of us ever asked about them.

If he had continued winning his bouts, perhaps he would not have gone on to do his anthropology at Harvard! There he played a slightly gentler sport, rugby, one of those like hockey that Harvard keeps bringing talent in from the Common-

wealth to play. Dick was voted Most Valuable Rugby Player at Harvard in 1952 and went to the Bermuda Tournament as a member of the U.S. all-star team. He continued to play during his fieldwork and study in Australia and New Guinea, where he was at center-threequarter on the Papua New Guinea championship team in 1953. Dick also mountain-climbed, skied, and cycled, and his love of sports lasted all his life.

But it was his boxing that he was most proud of, and his boxing that perhaps served as the metaphor for his later career. Dick's approach to research, as he himself did it and as he fostered it in his students, was to wade in directly, to do research by starting to do it, not by preparing grand schemes or training for years in preparatory courses. It is significant that as Dean the one course he kept teaching in the Department was his "Introduction to Research," the course where he found eager students and turned them into anthropologists by encouraging them to wade in, to plan some research and start doing it, not by telling them how joyful it would be to study anthropology for long years or by drilling them on "field work methods."

Dick's approach to applying anthropology was in the same vein. He sought to bring opposed parties into direct but evenly-matched confronta-

tion: he insisted that development agencies, private firms or governments not simply clobber local people, but that those who were to be affected by development be given the knowledge and the coaching to wage a fair fight for themselves. The approach worked well, in New Britain off new Guinea, in Bougainville, in Guyana, in James Bay and across the Canadian north. In his writings on the role of the anthropologist in development situations we see him laying down the rules for fair fights and for good coaching.

Dick's approach to building institutions, whether the multitude of anthropological organizations he constructed or the administrative units he worked in here at McGill, also had its pugilistic inspirations. Dick always sought to find the openings, take advantage of the right moments, feint and jab, and above all never to back down from challenges. An entrepreneur, he always stepped in to new opportunities, never away from them. Impatient with methodicalness and grand planning, he preferred to win points where he could find them, and to go on to seize new ground rather than rest on the point already won. So he stepped in to take on the immense job of chairing the program of the XIth International

Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, he saw the need to direct the Center for Developing-Area Studies at McGill at a critical moment, and he achieved growth in the Faculty of Arts — point by point, a quarter or a half a position at a time — when many of the rest of us were feeling that nothing could be done.

Those of us who were privileged to be his colleagues in the McGill Department of Anthropology knew that he was not just the founder of our Department but its central pillar and primary illumination. What distinctiveness and distinction we have, as a Department built around the study of social change and development, we owe largely to Dick's leadership. By his many seminal writings, his stature in anthropology is assured; his stature as a colleague and as a human being will be assured in the impression he has left on all of us as a championship player on the side of social science, humane development, and respect for one another.

NOTE

The author is indebted to Mary Salisbury for conversations upon which this reflection is based.

RICHARD F. SALISBURY, REFLECTIONS ON THE INTEGRITY OF THEORY AND PRAXIS

Harvey A. Feit
McMaster University

In the midst of an academic world which has become increasingly specialized, increasingly skeptical of claims to sound knowledge and wisdom, and increasingly ambiguous about the role of scholars in the wider world, Richard Salisbury stood out. He stood out in part because he did not reflect these trends. He always had an intellectually rigorous point of view, a commitment to what he thought was right, and a passionate activism in the service of other people and peoples. He was a scholar who deeply affected those who had the opportunity to know or work with him, students and colleagues.

Richard Salisbury pursued an exceptionally productive career as a scholar, teacher, administrator, applied social scientist, and public figure. Yet, the generosity with which he gave his skills and resources to others was truly exceptional. As a teacher, his pedagogical style was an uncommon but effective combination of intellectual clarity, incisive

knowledge of the subject, and a gentle frankness. What was fascinating to me was how he upheld high standards of excellence yet encouraged creative learning. He had an unusual capacity to contribute to the scholarly work of students by showing the student that they had done more than they thought, at the same time as suggesting that they had done less than they were capable. He cultivated this disjuncture, using supportive yet incisive critical advice in order to clarify assumptions and present alternative formulations which opened students to new insights.

I will never forget my first extended scholarly encounter with him in a graduate school setting. He served as the initially anonymous evaluator of my Masters Thesis. Most of his roughly-typed page of comments were straight forward and generally encouraging, but his final paragraph took my breath away. He started out by simply stating that I had