Aydon Edward Altin Charlton

OCTOBER 20, 2025

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November 21, 1948 – October 20, 2025

Aydon Charlton died in hospice with family at his side on October 20, 2025. He had a number of serious health issues but ultimately could not overcome the attack on his autoimmune system. He faced his end admirably.

Aydon leaves to mourn him his wife Merrilee Rasmussen, son Kai Charlton (Taylor Depuydt), stepdaughters Zena Charowsky (Mark Geldof) and Ciara McIlwaine (Chris Clarke), grandchildren Thian Clarke, Tynan Clarke, Tristan Blair, and Magdalena Clarke, and his brother John (Sharon) Charlton. He is also survived by his devoted friend, Bob McIlwaine, with whom he shared many trips to various places in the world and, more recently, grandfather duties. He was predeceased by his parents Phil and June Charlton and brother Brien Charlton.

Aydon was born and raised in Regina’s north end, attending Albert School and Scott Collegiate and then going on to the University of Regina (then the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus). He described himself as growing up in the shadow of Taylor Field (the original one, that is). Phil worked at the Saskatchewan Book Bureau during Aydon’s youth, and Aydon fondly recalled Phil bringing home deaccessioned books for his boys to read.

He loved the written word and he loved stories. He had an appreciation for good writing, and was dedicated to learning and helping others learn. He was instrumental in establishing a university literary magazine called The Sphinx, and the cover illustration was done by his high school and university friend, artist Lorne Beug. This seems to have inspired a life-long appreciation of sphinges (the plural of “sphinx” which he was always careful to use), as he amassed a collection of almost two dozen statues of various sizes over the years. He saw the real thing when he and Merrilee travelled to Egypt in late 2022.

He had a brief foray into the world of law. He was accepted to Osgoode Hall in 1978 as only one of two applicants from Saskatchewan. He quit after a few months, disgusted with the way the courts came to decisions that he felt were unfair. He often said later that it was easier to marry a good lawyer than to be one. Merrilee always felt complimented by that but was also a little embarrassed when he handed out her business card in the delivery room when Kai was born.

Early on he found a place in life with people who held similar convictions, ideas and ideals to suit his social conscience. He served as a public servant in the Blakeney and Romanow governments, working as a speech writer for Premier Allan Blakeney and for Roy Romanow as an executive assistant. He was part of the Saskatchewan team that negotiated the patriation of the Canadian Constitution with the federal government and the provinces in the early 1980s. Romanow also helped to entice him away from law school by pointing out that constitutional law would always be there, but constitutional politics was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. He played an important role in delivering “the deal” put together by Romanow and Howard Leeson to Roy McMurtry at his hotel late at night, dodging security and the Quebec Minister who was trying to eavesdrop on his conversation at the public telephones. These were the days before ubiquitous cellphones and text messages.

He was a professor of English at the U of R for a number of years, teaching English 100 to perhaps thousands of students. He developed what he called his “culture quiz”, which was not a test of students’ knowledge but an effort to find out what books, movies, films, etc., every student in the class, as well as he as the teacher, had in common so that he could make understandable references when he spoke about literature. He was rather chagrined to discover that in a group of 35 students, the only thing they had in common was (at the time) the Simpsons and computers. He would often run into former students years later, several of whom visited him while he was in hospital. Merrilee recalls one of them telling her several years ago that Aydon was the best professor he ever had.

During his time at the U of R, Aydon also played a major role as part of the Faculty Association bargaining team to create the “Instructor” category in the collective agreement. This provided not just an increase in salary from that paid to sessional lecturers, but also security of employment – not quite tenure but an important improvement to the employment status of those in the category providing some employment benefits as well as the kind of job security that helps with things like mortgages.

Aydon was a scrupulous proofreader and an outstanding editor. He edited countless essays, journal articles, chapters, and books over the years, including Merrilee’s Governor General’s award-winning MA thesis and Ciara’s Governor General’s award-nominated MA thesis. During his lengthy hospital stay, he was still proofreading for his friends and colleagues.

Aydon had an extensive library. He intended to buy every book he saw on any topic he was interested in. He estimated that he had about 30,000 books. In fact, he and Merrilee bought the house next door to help house the library. The total weight of all of the books in his library is estimated at 45,000 lbs (or 5 elephants) and if the pages of all books were laid out end-to-end, they would stretch around the

circumference of the Earth three times!

Aydon had diverse interests and lots of them; golf was one, travel another. He and Merrilee travelled with good friends to Turkey and Greece many times. He enjoyed golfing trips to Ireland and Scotland where he was thrilled to be able to play the Old Course. He discovered South America and its wonders and loved Montevideo, Uruguay, where he and Merrilee purchased an apartment. They shared that home with many friends as shelter from the often brutal Saskatchewan winters. Aydon invited everyone to come visit and many did.

In recent years, Aydon befriended the team at Montevideo's Museo Andes 1972—a museum dedicated to remembering the 1972 crash of Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571. Aydon found the survivors' story inspiring, as they overcame obstacles through determination and creativity and co-operated with each other to try to survive the aftermath of the crash for 72 days in the Andes. He felt fortunate to have met Roberto Canessa, one of the two who walked out through the Andes in winter to find help to save the rest of the survivors, and who is now a pediatric oncologist in Uruguay. Aydon assisted the museum with translating exhibit labels from Spanish to English, one of the few museums in Montevideo that does so.

Merrilee is overwhelmed with the many communications she has received attesting to Aydon's keen intelligence, sense of humour, and generosity, as well as his astute political observations. She relied on him to keep her aware of what was happening in the world and knowledgeably informed. The house is empty now.

A celebration of life will be held in spring 2026. Details to follow at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that you consider donating blood, if you are able, to Canadian Blood Services, or making a donation in his memory to the Museo Andes 1972, which Aydon loved (https://mandes.uy/en/donations/).

The family would like to thank the physicians, nurses, and staff on Units 3F and 6F at the Regina General Hospital for the incredible care Aydon received during his

11 weeks in hospital. Thank you also to the countless friends and family who spent many, many hours visiting him—you brought him great joy and companionship in his final weeks.

Messages of Condolence

To Merrilee and your family, I am so very sorry for your loss. I know Aydon was very loved and respected in the Regina community. My condolences to you at this difficult time.

— Wenda McArthur

To Aydon’s family: all who knew his fine manners and quick wit in this life will indeed feel this a most grievous loss. My most sincere and deepest sympathy.JBR

— Jim Rugg

RIP Aydon. My condolences to your family. It was a pleasure to know you!

— Bob Friesen

So very sorry to know Ayden has left this world and has gone on to the next. I was fortunate to call Aydon a friend that I met at the Royal Regina Golf Club. We spent many hours at the range whacking balls and telling golf stories. Ayden would show me his latest golf gadget, and with us both being left handers, we would take turns testing the gadget and imagining the possibilities once we got on the course. He was so much fun to talk to and had a kind word for everyone. Aydon was such a thoughtful person; conversations with him were interesting and often had very funny conclusions. Aydon was a gentleman and touched those who knew him.Aydon will be missed by so many. Our sincere condolences to your family.

— David Tulloch

To the family of Aydon...my deepest condolences. Aydon and I went to Scoot Collegiate from 1962 - 1966. We also attend the U of R after high school together. Aydon was a brilliant student and a good friend. I grief his passing but know at some point in time we will meet again! Bless you all!

— Bob Hornsberger

Dear Merrilee and Family, I was saddened to learn of Aydon's passing and write to extend my condolences. Aydon was an intelligent, friendly and compassionate person and it was always a pleasure to be in his company - including, on curling ice! Please accept my sincere sympathy.

— Harry Van Mulligen

Merrilee,I send sincere condolences to you and your family in this time of sorrow. Aydon was a wonderful person and his loss will be deeply felt by many. Take good care of yourselves as you grieve.

— Julie Mckenna

Our deepest sympathies to all of Aydon's family. We knew Aydon for years at the university. He will be missed.

— Alison Hayford and Paul Gingrich

Merrilee, so very saddened to learn that you lost Aydon last week. It was so lovely to see you both at the Saskatchewan Book Awards last May. Sending caring thoughts and condolences to you and your family

— Donna Woloshyn

It was sad news to learn of Aydon's death. My condolences to his family. I remember Aydon as intelligent, funny, opinionated but never dogmatic. It was always a pleasure to be in his company.

— Jim Holmes

Aydon and I were from the same neighborhood, Albert-Scott men and proud of it. Our parents were great friends so although he was older than me I somehow always knew him. We ended up in the Dawson-Mise circle of literary debauchery when he was finishing his MA (was it really on Wilkie Collins?!) and I was starting out and I always looked up to him. Later in life we connected on Facebook and shared some thoughts and ideas and memories - his favourite being when his dad Phil single-handedly turned a triple play at the St. Pater’s parish picnic. I remember him fondly and feel diminished by his death. My warmest thoughts are with his family and close friends. - Eugene Stickland

— Eugene Stickland

I am very sorry to hear Aydon has passed away. I first met Aydon in the late 90's as my English 100 professor. His passion for teaching English was evident, and this motivated me to consider, and then to pursue a degree in the field myself. Years later, I reconnected with Aydon at the Royal Regina Golf Club, often enjoying chats while whacking balls at the driving range. He was such an interesting person, and always was fully engaged in the conversation at hand. I will miss seeing him. Rest in peace Aydon!

— shawn pollock

I had the privilege of knowing Ayden for many years starting with the time of the Blakeney government. Such a good person. Lived his stories and his sense of humour. We both shared the same frustrations with our respective golf games but loved the game anyway!!The last time I spent with Ayden was late in the golf season when we had a “three hour” lunch at the golf club. I will miss his friendship, his gentle nature and his amazing intellect. Rest easy my friend!!Graham

— Graham Barker

Dear Merrilee and familyI have been truly saddened by the untimely death of my nephew Aydon. I have known and loved him since he was a small child and watched him grow into an accomplished, compassionate adult. I visited Regina from Victoria this past summer. Although he was obviously ill, Aydon somehow found the time and energy for us to enjoy a meal together. I am so very grateful for his kindnesses to his old auntie over the years. I am finding it difficult to imagine a world without Aydon.

— Elta Brown

 A wonderful tribute that prof Aydon would have given top grades to — on both English and historical grounds. Deepest condolences to Merrilee, John, and families, and all those many friends. Rest in peace old soul.

— Jim Hines and Autumn Downey

I'm so sorry, Merrilee. I loved Aydon ever since we were graduate students together at the UofS Regina Campus. He taught me to drink beer and shoot poolm ub the company of several fellow students and our favortie professor. I've always considereed him a friend.

— Lyn Goldman

Merrilee,I just heard about Aydon’s passing. I am so sorry for your loss and wanted you to know that you and your family are in my thoughts.Ranald

— Ranald Rasmussen

Aydon was a remarkable person. If I asked about his golf game with Jack, I would get a blow by blow description. His attention to detail was indeed remarkable. My condolences to you Merrilee and your family.Cara

— Cara Driscoll

To Merrilee and your family, I am so very sorry for your loss. Aydon was a very fine person and made contributions to his community. I don't think I'm blinded by the fact that we shared politics. I'm sure he will be missed. Condolences.

— Wenda McArthur

my condolences Merrilee, John and families. I met Aydon at Scott collegiate, and then at university (Regina) a group of us Scott alumni formed a sort of “four musketeers”. Some of the best memories of my life are from that time together. Later, we went in different directions, but Aydon found a way to never leave university, spending most of his working life teaching others about the books and ideas he loved. The exception was his very notable interlude in politics, working with some of the most important people and issues of the time. He was always a great supporter of my work (later together with Merrrile), starting in university days when he used artists’ work on the cover of the magazine he started and edited called The Sphinx. Aydon was always a fountain of information and ideas - I knew he was a great lover of books, but 30,000! An amazing, multifaceted guy, gone too soon and much missed.

— Lorne Beug

Prof. Charlton was the first English professor I had at the University of Regina. At the time, I was attending as an "undeclared" student. I didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up, just that I needed to continue learning. I took English 100 with Prof. Charlton (one of the few classes/professors that I can remember from that time over 20 years ago now) and he was one of the reasons why I continued as an English major after that. Thank you Aydon for helping me on my path to where I find myself today.

— Robin Canham

Aydon and I shared an office in the English Department at the University of Regina from 1982-1985. His intellectual range, great sense of humour, and deep knowledge of a city and province that were new to me enriched my time there. Who could ask for a better first prairie friend? His anecdotes were wonderful to hear. He once asked Tommy Douglas to name his proudest achievement on an airplane. To his surprise, Douglas said rural electrification with health care second. He once made two piles in a bookstore - the yes pile and the maybe pile. He loved books. We played on the English Department softball team. Rumours that he went on to become a skilled and avid golfer have been confirmed. Sending deepest condolences to Merrilee and family.

— David Gay

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https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/aydon-edward-altin-charlton

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