

Bill LaFleur.

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-by Renee Hester

I stopped to talk to an Eagle Bay summer resident who, like me, was coming out of Eagle Bay Mini Mart. She asked for the gentleman who always visited the Mini Mart and drove a small silver Honda. She did not know him by name but missed seeing him and listening to his droll sense of humour as he conversed with store owners, John and Judy Kowalyshyn and visiting customers.

I knew she was speaking of long-time Eagle Bay resident, Bill Lafleur. She is not alone; everyone misses Bill who passed away at his home at the end of last August. Summer residents could not know our friend and neighbour is no longer with us.

Several months ago I spoke to Bill's wife, Jean, about her husband. Bill was born into a large family in Alberta. He was sent to boarding school at age four and never forgot the trauma of having to leave his home and especially his mother, at such an early age. She described Bill as a devoted family man, a successful realtor, a sport's fan, and a man with a wonderful sense of humour. Bill's sister was sure the song "My Way" was either written for him or adopted by him as a theme song.

For many years, Bill and Jean lived in New Westminster. Jean was a nurse and Bill in real estate. She told me they always had season's tickets for the hockey games and seldom missed a game. They always had horses and their children learned to ride at an early age. Bill's wife and family were his life.

Later, Bill relocated his family to Kamloops where he opened his own sales office. Once again, he supported the local hockey club by having season's tickets.


When the Lafleurs retired to Eagle Bay, Bill became involved in the operation of Eagle Bay Community Hall. As his health failed, it was necessary for him to withdraw from community activities but the help he had given was practical and from the heart.

Most residents of Eagle Bay remember Bill as a gentleman who drove Eagle Bay Road at a super low speed. He made several trips a day to the Mini Mart and pulled over to the roadside every time a car was behind him. Bill never impeded traffic. This was the speed he chose but not necessarily that of others. His son swore it took hours for a trip to Balmoral, but this was Bill's way.

One day as we returned from Salmon Arm, a silver Honda fairly flew by in the opposite direction. We could hardly believe it was Bill. I said the only thing that would make Bill move like that was if Jean needed him, or something had happened to their wee Schnauzer, Dusty. It was a safe assumption. The car keys were accidentally locked in Jean's car in the mall parking lot, and Dusty was the only occupant. Bill was rushing to town with another set of keys.

The following day, and just to tease him, I asked Bill if it could possibly have been him moving so quickly the day before. He assured me it was and what's more, he had several other speeds. That particular one was "faster" but he had "fastest" if he needed it. Moreover, he told all at the Mini Mart, he gave driving lessons every Tuesday night. He also offered to drag race with anyone driving a ride-on mower! Such was the quick wit of this man!

Bill hated hospitals and did everything in his power to avoid admission; he felt the



best nurse possible was available to him at home. He was right. Jean said the contentment on Bill's face as he sat on their deck with a smoke and a can of beer was worth all the medicine a hospital could offer. The day he passed away, he said he was going for a wee nap and told Jean to enjoy the beach as he rested. He left the world peacefully in the place he loved.

Mini Mart proprietor John Kowalyshyn said it best, "I miss my buddy"!

