

A Tribute to a Great Friend – Bob Coxon.

To one and all assembled here today ~ Thanks for coming and supporting Bob's Widow, Jane. As a Past President of Ontario Group, I am very pleased to be asked to say a few words for this personal buddy of mine ever since the days when the 441 Barrie Bunch gathered on Hwy 90 that led to Camp Borden. Bob was the Wing President in those years, at the same time that I was the Ontario Group President. Our friendship has always been top notch and harmonious, and it sure provoked much debate about a myriad of topics, let me tell you.

I read of a man who stood to speak,
At a funeral of a friend,
He referred to the dates on the tombstone,
From the beginning to the end,
He noted that 1st came the date of his birth,
And he spoke of the last with tears . . .
And he said what mattered the most of all,
Was that DASH between the years –
For that DASH represented the time he spent
Alive here on this earth –
And only those, who knew him,
Know what that little line was worth!
The car, the tools, the cash....
For it matters not, how much we own –
What really matters is how we lived and loved
And how did we spend that DASH.

From my perspective as a 35-year member of the Military, I'd say that Bob had spent his years, his DASH, pretty productively, and in every aspect of his life. In researching his life, I've learned that prior to his becoming a member of our Air Force Association in 1985, he spent a distinguished career in the Insurance business. Since he was not only a kind and honest business man, and possessed a great sense of humour, he was well known throughout this region of the province through his ability to call BALLS and STRIKES for the local Slow Pitch and Fastball Associations; and just as he did in his day to day life, he became very passionate and avid about the calls that he made for all Groups, Associations, the Wings, and those he made decisions for. It would appear that Bob has called a great number of HOME RUNS for various paramilitary clubs and

associations throughout this neck of the woods. His interests varied considerably, and certainly were evident by his achievements at Edenvale. During the winter months, in particular, Bob had a penchant for model trains, light gauge mostly. I'm sure he was able to stay out of Jane's' hair from time to time, building and painting the dioramas and backgrounds that would spruce these real looking models right up.

Oh yes, and speaking about Bob's 'Lady Jane', I understand that Bob met his wife Jane when he was finally introduced to her at the Wing. Jane officially joined our Association in 2002, and lo and behold, they were married three years later (in 2005). Like many of us who belonged to the Wing over the years, the wives were fastidious when it came to supporting their mates in everything that took place at that Wing, and all the other Wings they visited together. I gotta tell you, Jane complemented Bob's efforts in everything he participated in, and she made sure she was right by his side, to ensure the effort would be a complete success. As you likely know, Bob was a proud and prominent President during the 2007-08 years when the Wing was sold. He took up the gavel once again in 2013 – 14, and on short notice when Ken Stacey was too sick to carry out his duties, once again, Bob filled the breach in 2016. The next couple of years, Bob and his AGM Committee jumped in with both feet and became the Wing's driving force when 441 Barrie Wing joined with 429 Georgina Wing membership to host the very successful 2017 Ontario Group AGM, which was held in Orillia.

Over the years, Bob and I exchanged many a file concerning loads of subject matter. Fortunately, I learned to listen to Bob, even if I didn't necessarily agree with him. He truly was an extremely interesting sod, but he could be forceful at times. Guess many people liked him, just as he appeared to them. Like our BUSMAN's Holiday to Wright Patterson AF Base, in Dayton, Ohio. Bob voiced an edict. He wanted to drive. That was it! He was going to drive our limousine both ways, there and back! What surprised me greatly when we did arrive there, as we toured the grounds and the hangars of this huge Museum, was the fact that he knew so much about the Air Force, and Aviation, yet in essence, he never signed up, or he never flew in the AF. At least, I never could find anything that proved that statement otherwise. I will share with you on good authority, that Bob's greatest thrill came to him when he was invited to lay the Wreaths at our special Association parades and occasions. He did have a soft, and squishy heart! We would talk for hours about the Cadets when we got

together. He believed, as I did, in that organization very sincerely, and could be called upon to invest his time and efforts, even on short notice.

Well, Bob's time has come and it has gone, but on behalf of all the folks both here and elsewhere, that made up the Groups who worked tirelessly with Bob in the past years, be it para military or civilian, I feel honoured to publicly say a H U G E Thank You Bob, for enriching our lives with your presence. You have truly been one heck of a great friend, and we will miss you.

I'm no different than many others who give a eulogy to mark their friends' passing how best do you end it?

Might I simply recap these words I've found over the years . . .

I hope there's a place way up in the sky
Where Association fellas can go, when they have to die
A place where a guy can buy a cold beer
For a friend and a comrade whose memory is dear

A place where no doctor or lawyer can tread
Nor a Management type would ere be caught dead
Just a quaint little place, full of Air Force folk,
Where they like to sing songs, and love a good joke
The kind of place where a lady could go
And feel safe and protected
By the men she would know

There must be a place where old Presidents go
When their pains are all gone, and their air speed is low
Where tales are told about when they were young
And songs about flying and dying are sung.

Where you'd see all the fellows who'd flown West before
And they call out your name, as you came through the door
Who'd buy you a drink, if your thirst should be bad,
And relate to the others
"He was quite a good lad"!

Yes, over the years, Bob spent his DASH very wisely, and very generously. And like so many before him, he has headed West. Not alone, into the sunset, but into the company of friends who have gone before him.

Safe Travels, my Friend!

Written by Sam Newman – 427 (London) Wing