

Good afternoon, everyone. Today it is my privilege to talk to you about the man whom we are gathered here to honour, Mister Eldred Buchanan. Buck. First, please allow me a moment to thank Edna, Ruth, Barb, and Karen for choosing me to compose and deliver these few words. I am deeply touched and sincerely humbled to have the honour of offering a public tribute to this wonderful man. So ladies, I thank you. That said, I hope you will forgive me any minor anecdotal errors I may commit.

I have known the Buchanans for about 13 years. For those of you who don't know the connection, Buck was the beloved Grandad of my and Karen's two little girls, Alex and Emma. I am not here to give you a detailed history of Buck's life and times. I really don't have the qualifications to do that. I can tell you that he was born in Ontario on August 7, 1926. I can tell you that he was a distinguished veteran of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, and the Royal Canadian Air Force. I can tell you that he spent years working for the Department of Veteran Affairs, as well as the Saint John campus of the New Brunswick Community College. However, today is not really about listing the many tasks that Buck completed, or about outlining his many impressive accomplishments. Today is about reflecting on the person, the individual, that Buck was; about the profound influence he has had on each of us; and about how we as family and friends have been enriched by Buck's presence in our lives.

I like to think I knew Buck fairly well, in that I was close enough to him to see different aspects of his personality on a frequent basis. However, he had certain characteristics that defined the person he was, no matter what the situation. He was, at his core, a family man, a gentle man of generosity, of compassion and concern for others, a sweet, sensitive man of subtlety, but with a hilarious, occasionally unpredictable sense of humour. The kind of man who was not just Edna's husband... but her devoted, lifelong partner. The kind of man who was not just a father to Barb, Ruth, Heather, and Karen... but their loving, doting Dad. A man strongly dedicated to his community, to his church, and to his family.

The story of how Buck and Edna met is a classic. It was at a Christmas party, they were both in attendance, with lots of other boys and girls; not really a couples thing, but basically sort of a socializing evening. The next day, Edna received a call from one of the girls inviting her to Christmas dinner with a few other friends. She was uninterested. "Nooo, I don't think so, I'm kind of tired, I'm just going to stay home..."

"Buck's coming."

"I'll BE there!" The rest, as they say, is history. The nicest part is, that kind of sweetness never faded. Many times, I would see Buck courteously opening the car door for Edna, or I'd notice them walking together in the mall, holding hands.

Buck's devotion to his family was particularly evident through his relationship with his daughters. I know that many of Karen's fondest memories of childhood involve spending time one-on-one with her dad. He would take her fishing, and he'd spend hours playing badminton with her in the yard. He recognized the sometimes under-appreciated bond that a father shares with his daughters, and he did everything in his power to give his children the best life he possibly could. Even as the girls grew up, moved out, and had

families of their own, Buck was always the first to offer advice and assistance to help them through life's trials. He and Edna have always done everything they could for their family.

Although he was generally a quiet, subtle man, Buck was very much an individual. Then again, sharing a home with 5 females with only one bathroom, he had little choice but to establish a strong identity and fend for himself. I assume this is where he honed his superior skills in diplomacy and conflict resolution. But behind the quiet smile and unassuming demeanor was a lively sense of humour. I've heard the story of how one quirky friend of the family, Esmeralda P. Duddymire, never showed up until Buck was conveniently not around. It was only after careful comparisons of photographs that Ruth's kids realized that this strange woman was, in fact, their Grandad. He also had an entire arsenal of favourite phrases and words, which we affectionately called Buckisms. He might say to Edna, "Consarn it, Mother, this weather sure is persnickety," or if he wanted to describe something with a broad range of characteristics, he'd say it ran "from the sublime to the ridiculous". Or my personal favourite, "holy tomatoes", although I only heard that one maybe twice.

Buck always had a keen interest in a variety of activities and hobbies. He amassed a huge stamp collection, and he had a particular fondness for knick-knacks and other collectibles in the form of elephants. He enjoyed listening to music, particularly big band music such as that of Glenn Miller, and I recall the time he asked me with genuine interest what I thought of Gene Krupa's drumming. He loved James Bond movies, and I remember the time he asked me to put Star Wars in the VCR so he could see the cantina scene, with all the weird characters and especially that distinctive song. He laughed like a ten-year old and said that no matter how many times he watched that scene, it always cracked him up.

Among Buck's many interests, I would have to say that his gardening and his pets were the most important to him. Every spring and summer, day after day, for hours on end, Buck would putter and toil in the beautifully landscaped gardens around the property on Willie Avenue, and the results were visually spectacular. Azaleas, tulips, poppies, roses, rhododendrons, for weeks on end, each blooming in turn, would greet any visitor upon entering the backyard from May through September. Even after he and Edna moved into an apartment, Buck continued to work away in the gardens, as Karen and I had neither the time, nor resources, let alone the patience and knowledge, to tend them as he did. I think that the thoroughness, loving attention to detail, and nurturing patience that Buck demonstrated through his love of horticulture says a lot about the person he was. The same can be said of his love of animals. Buck and Edna have always had pets, and he cherished his animals as faithful companions. I remember years ago whenever he would come over, Karen's cat Mindy would come running to him, knowing that she'd receive lots of attention. Through their dog breeder acquaintances, Buck and Edna owned a number of collies over the years. I remember one young collie named Trekkie that actually managed to test Buck's considerable patience. Poor Trekkie was a handsome dog, but he suffered from a neurological disorder which resulted in a learning disability, and Buck could not teach him to do anything. As the dog blissfully ignored his instructions, you could hear a kind of quiet exasperation slowly creeping into Buck's voice: "Trekkie. *Trekkie.*" Still, true to form, Buck never gave up. He loved that dog just as he loved all his other pets. He always had a way with animals, and I suspect it's because they could sense the kindness in him.

The exception to this rule would be snakes. To say that Buck disliked snakes would be an understatement. Ruth recently told me about the time when, as a child, she surprised Buck while he was on the phone by innocently tossing a rubber snake in his direction. Unfortunately, he was nursing one broken ankle and one sprained ankle at the time. Apparently crutches, telephones, and colourful language all flew through the air. Buck was an easy-going man, but I don't think the incident was ever repeated.

As I say this final goodbye to Buck, I am very much aware of the profound impact he has had on our lives. I recognize so much of him in his daughters, values that he has instilled in them: his compassion, his kindness, his humour, his devotion to his family. And although he loved to complain about the occasional head cold, he successfully faced a number of serious health issues over the years with grace and dignity. In Edna, a wonderful, vibrant lady, I see the reflection of the quiet strength that was uniquely Buck's. And in my daughters, I see the fulfillment and joy of a close, loving relationship with their Grandad. I don't think I ever saw him greet either of them with anything other than a huge grin and a delighted hello. The last time I saw Buck, in palliative care at the Saint John Regional Hospital, I looked back as we were leaving, and he was waving goodbye to my girls with a big smile on his face. What a sweet last memory he gave me.

Buck was a wonderful man, and what a pleasure it has been to know him. What made him that much more special was that he treasured his loved ones as much as they treasured him. For those of us left to say goodbye, let's be grateful for Buck's inspiration. Let's treasure the special people in our lives.

Buck, we will miss you. Thank you for everything.

Todd