

Malcolm Giles (Mac) Tyler

Some individuals fill a room with the warmth and the strength of their personalities. Their departure leaves the room saddened, but offset by the many strong memories of the good times.

When Mac passed away in late November 2016, New Westminster lost one of its most popular sons. He had an innate grace, humility and sense of humour that projected from his six-foot-four frame in John Wayne fashion. He had a gentle manner that endeared him to women and a raw strength that men admired. Outgoing, kind, generous, he made friends throughout his life.

At the centre of Mac's life for 50 years was his beautiful and serene wife, Bonnie, an ICU nurse of the kind you want to have in the surgery room, leaving you feeling comforted that the knowledgeable, confident and efficient nurse will ensure the doctor has all the necessary support. Bonnie was Mac's partner in the best sense of the word, the centre of his home life, the mother of his children and the platform for Mac's wide and generous hospitality, as well as his caregiver over the later years of his life as he dealt with a series of serious illnesses.

But let me go back. Mac's father played lacrosse as a member of the New Westminster Salmonbellies (1935-43) and performed his war service in Canada. Mac was born in 1943, preceded by his brother, Warne, and succeeded by his sister, Suellen. Mac's dad, among other work, drove a bus, sold cars and worked in an investment firm. He died unexpectedly in 1962 and Mac's mother, Maggie, took a job as supervisor of student nurses' housing at the Royal Columbian Hospital, and following that lived for many years in White Rock.

Mac's early life played out during the idyllic post-war period, on Kelly Street in Sapperton. Young children ran in the neighbourhood, played games on the streets and, as they grew older, gravitated to Hume Park for baseball, basketball and football until sunset, or until their mothers' calls for dinner ended play.

Mac's long-time friend Keith Hansen recalls, as had Mac, Marlene James (now more famous as Marlene Scott, Q.C., and first woman president of the CBABC) as a Parks Board employee organizing their soccer and other summer pursuits. The boys went on from Sir Richard McBride Elementary to Vincent Massey Junior High (Mac as student president) to Lester Pearson



where Mac formed part of an excellent basketball team, which came third in the 1961 high school provincial championship.

Warne Tyler remembers their school football team, which Warne quarterbacked, but due to the abject failure of his offensive ends (Dave McDonald and Mac) to block for him, he spent most of the time handing the football off to his running back, Brent Gifford.

If you are interested in lacrosse and the history of New Westminster, then I recommend the excellent history of lacrosse in British Columbia from 1880–2013 written by W.B. MacDonald, son of the late Walter MacDonald, entitled *Salmonbellies vs. the World: The Story of Lacrosse's Most Famous Team & Their Greatest Rivals*.

Lacrosse used to be *the* crosstown rivalry between New Westminster and Vancouver. Crowds of up to 15,000 people would watch field lacrosse at Queen's Park. So great was the rivalry that the owner of the Vancouver lacrosse team hired Newsy Lalonde for \$5,000 a season, when Lalonde was being paid \$1,200 a season to play for the Montreal Canadiens. Lacrosse is a rigorous but skilled game played by hard, tough men (and women) who run three to five miles a game, and the battles described in the book are epic.

The Mann Cup, initially donated in 1910, is the symbol of the senior club lacrosse championship of Canada. The Salmonbellies have won the cup 24 times.

For a long time the Salmonbellies set the standard for excellence, making them comparable to the Montreal Canadiens or the New York Yankees or the New Zealand All Blacks, save for the compensation (one of the best financial rewards was a place on the New Westminster Fire Department).

Mac was on three Mann Cup teams, and was captain his last three years. He started out as a 165-pound "lawn dart" and by the time I started watching him, Mac was in his prime at six-foot-four, 230 pounds, occupying the corner of the opponent's goal on the power play and taking a fearful beating from opponents' sticks as he would take a pass and wheel toward the goalie with those long arms reaching out to snap a shot. Dr. Radford regularly drained his elbows, hip and knee of fluids pre-game. He played 305 games from 1964–73 with 307 goals and 262 assists, and was inducted into the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame in 2006.

Mac started at UBC while working in local wood firms, and he graduated in 1965. He then went on to complete a two-year master's degree in physical education at McMaster.

He met Bonnie in 1965 as she was graduating from nursing at Royal Columbian Hospital where she was president of her graduating class. Mac

had been a member of Young Life with Gil Dyck and Bobby Meighan (who, respectively, would later become an accomplished doctor and an equally accomplished lawyer). But Bonnie's first recollection of him was at a nurses' dance when he arrived with Skip Chapman having plainly imbibed at the Royal Towers. Bonnie went off to Stanford University Health Centre for a year. Mac and Bonnie kept in touch as he went on to McMaster and then obtained his first (and last) teaching position in Vernon.

While Mac's teaching skills may have been questioned by his employers, he left an indelible impression on the Vernon class of 1968, who left a touching note in the memorial column of *The Province*. Bonnie said the year in Vernon was "a hoot". Apart from coaching basketball and football Mac enjoyed canoeing and skiing.

It is my belief that Bobby Meighan, then at McQuarrie Hunter, took Mac to visit the firm and Mac found the atmosphere at the firm "like family" and so enrolled at UBC law school in the fall of 1968. That was one year in which the Salmonbellies played in a professional league and won, even though the financial rewards were "\$1.69". Mac took a year off from law school in 1970-71 to work as a manager in a building firm. The firm went broke. But he found true wealth in marrying Bonnie.

He finished his law degree in 1972 and articulated at McQuarrie Hunter under the tutelage of B.J. Pettenuzzo, Q.C. He did not need to interview. Like David Brine after him, a native son had direct entry. Tommy Fisher (as he then was) and Glenn Gates would have ensured that.

Mac's ability to understand people; his friendly personality; his sense of fun, humour and mischief; and his hospitableness, be it at the firm, out on the town or to those invading his home (oh Bonnie, how many nights were you awoken to feed the revellers?!)—all those human virtues were valuable assets as he developed his specialties in personal injury and family law. There is no question he became the heart of the firm from the late 1970s on. To Kim Floeck, Rick Molstad, Bob Collings, Perry Armitage, Brian Shreiber and many others, he was the most approachable partner, and many times a depressed junior lawyer would be lifted up by his common-sense approach to issues.

In time Mac became the firm's ICBC liaison person, and McQuarrie Hunter benefitted from his contribution to the partnership.

Bonnie kept on nursing at the Royal Columbian Hospital, but Mac's health issues were also a matter to deal with. The swellings that had to be drained during his playing days diminished, but severe problems developed with his hips and knees, which led to replacement surgery.

About 1976 Dr. Robert Rothwell diagnosed Mac with haemochromatosis, which effectively means you are not expelling the iron from your blood

and it jams up your joints. In the meantime, Mac and Bonnie saw the arrival of their son Bill and daughters Megan and Jane. Bonnie and Mac parented in a fashion that has created three adults of whom we would all be proud.

Their house on Royal Avenue became a popular grandstand viewpoint for the annual May Day Parade through New Westminster, and many of us have accepted Mac's hospitality and dropped by to watch the passing floats and enjoy the refreshments.

Another book could be filled by Mac's love of fishing. Over the years he fished on Vancouver Island at Port McNeil and at the Queen Charlotte Lodge on Haida Gwaii. Jim Butterworth and Jake Frizzell frequently went with him, and he and David Brine saw that the McQuarrie Hunter Labour Day partnership meeting was spent fishing off the coast of Vancouver Island and then up to Haida Gwaii. The never-forgotten experience for most of us as novices was to spend a day in the boat, as Mac gladly took us under his wing, teaching us how to prepare bait, set a line and catch a fish. It was suggested he may have been involved in adding weights to a catch that might win the daily prize.

The Tyler and Hansen families started going up to Loon Lake in 1986—the family in June, “the guys” in July—and this continued for 30 years. “The guys” made sure there was one last fishing trip in the fall of 2016 ...

In the early 2000s Mac noticed some lumps on his neck, which Bonnie correctly diagnosed as being secondary to another lesion, likely in the throat. But test after test failed to find the primary location. Bonnie continued to assert there had to be another primary lesion and she insisted, when the doctors started what was going to be some complex surgery for removal of cancerous nodes, that they have one more look down his throat. She was right; they found the primary lesion. Bonnie gave Mac another nine years of life. He underwent radiation and chemotherapy and survived, though at tremendous cost to his large frame. He rebounded until the second round of less treatable cancer started to beset him in 2016.

He enjoyed reading widely, working on puzzles and playing cards, but he was at his best in a room full of people where his deep rumbling voice would be accompanied by huge laughter. He was the life of any gathering. On Christmas and other occasions the self-taught piano player would lead the group in song.

He contributed to his city with time on the Police Commission, the Advisory Planning Commission, and the Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation. He knew New Westminster and its occupants well, and he contributed his common sense to the public good.

When I read back over these words, they do not seem nearly enough. To go back and speak to his lifelong friends; to read of his athletic career in a decade where he played with other lacrosse greats such as Sepka, Bionda, Parnell, Lewthwaite, Winzowski and the Goss brothers; to recount his professional life where he was the heart of McQuarrie Hunter from the 1970s to 2000; to acknowledge that he was a friend and confidant to many; to celebrate his 50 years with Bonnie and his contribution to his children—this is only briefly to touch a few signal moments. But it does in a small way celebrate a life lived with warmth, humility, generosity, humour, strength, passion and compassion.

His life was gentle; and the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, "this was a man!"¹

The Honourable Mr. Justice Robert Crawford

With thanks to Bonnie Tyler, Warne Tyler, Keith Chapman, Jim Glanville, the Honourable Patrick Hyde, Bob Collings, Barbara Streight and Vikki Bell, Q.C.

ENDNOTE

1. Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (5, 5, 78–80).