

Daisy, Robert, relatives and friends of Joe, I am honored that Daisy has asked me to say a few words this afternoon in tribute to a good friend and neighbour.

Joe was the second of six children born to Frank and Rose McCann in North Battleford, Saskatchewan on July 3rd, 1914. Joe had three brothers, all of whom have predeceased him and two living sisters, one of whom, Bernadette, is able to be with us today.

Joe's father and uncle were owners of two ~~bars~~^{hotels} in North Battleford. Frank, Joe's father, was also an inventor who patented a device to stook grain. In the early 1920's Frank and his brother sold their establishments and with his share of the proceeds Frank continued to perfect the workings of his invention. The automatic grain stooker received a lot of attention and Massey-Harris offered Frank \$350,000 if he would transfer the patent to them. Joe's father refused this offer and decided to hold out for more. Unhappily, time was not on Frank's side and with the advent of the Massey-Harris combine, the automatic grain stooker became irrelevant and the family's chance at fame and very considerable fortune turned to dust.

Frank then took a position with the CNR as a power engineer on the Edmonton-Jasper rail line. He was stationed at Edson, Alberta, midway between Jasper and Edmonton. Meanwhile the rest of the family moved to Edmonton.

Joe was in his late teens during the Depression years. Like many others, Joe and his father sometimes worked in the fields to supplement the family income. As a hired hand, one

of Joe's tasks was to return the horses to the barn at the end of the day. Naturally the horses were very anxious to get home and it was very difficult to ~~hold on to~~ ^{control} them. Joe recalled that on one occasion the team arrived at the food trough in such a rush and stopped so abruptly that he was hurled through the air and landed unceremoniously in their trough.

Even during Canada's "dirty thirties" there had to be some time for recreation. Joe found his in hiking and camping in the nearby Rocky Mountains. It was easy for Joe to catch a freight train in Edson where his father worked and then venture into the mountain wilderness. As a young man, he became familiar with the splendid scenery of Lake Edith Cavell and Lake Maligne. However, in Canada's Rockies camping could be a pretty exciting adventure. Joe tells a story of falling asleep beside a glowing campfire only to awaken in the morning to find a huge bear standing over one of the sleeping campers. With much apprehension Joe watched as the furry beast gently removed a knapsack containing bacon which the young man was using as a pillow and ambled back into the bush. Nonetheless this experience failed to dampen Joe's enthusiasm for the outdoors and he continued to have a ^{long} ~~lifetime~~ love for hiking, camping, hunting and fishing.

While still in his very late teens, Joe was able to get an office job with Burns-the meat packing firm in Edmonton.

In 1939 World War II came along and Joe McCann enlisted in the RCAF. He soon earned a commission and became a fighter pilot. He flew everything from Tiger Moths to the legendary Spitfires. After serving time as an instructor in Canada he was posted to Great Britain as a part of ^{the} 441 squadron which flew Spitfire IX's in the air defence of the British Isles.

These several years were obviously⁵ an important part of Joe McCann's life and his R.C.A.F. Pilot's Flying Log Book enjoys a prominent place in the family library.

After the war, the Canadian Government introduced a program enabling returning veterans to further their education at government expense. Joe decided to avail himself of this opportunity. At thirty-one he believed that he should enter an area of study which would allow him to earn a living within a reasonable time frame. He chose optometry and registered in the program at the University of Toronto which had the only school of optometry at that time in English Canada.

In 1946 Joe found a summer job with the Canada Steamship Lines aboard the SS Kingston as a porter and eventually a purser. On board he met Daisy who was a hostess in the ship's dining room and a shipboard romance evolved. The Kingston was a 400 passenger sidewheeler that steamed three times a week from Toronto to Rochester, N.Y. to Kingston to Prescott and back to Toronto. As summer jobs went the positions on the SS Kingston were very lucrative and certainly provided adequate income to cover the September to May school year. Joe's position as purser was even more rewarding as he received a cut from the sale of every bottle of illegal alcohol which was secretly provided to the passengers cabins by the teams of porters aboard ship.

In his final summer aboard the Kingston Daisy recalls that Joe was an unrecognized but important footnote to one of Canada's great maritime disasters. After a date with Daisy, Joe returned early in the morning to the Kingston and sat

down with the chief steward to enjoy a nightcap. A few minutes later the Noronic, another cruise ship which was berthed at the same dock as the Kingston burst into flames which ultimately led to a great loss of life and the destruction of the vessel. The S.S. Kingston was a well-maintained but older ship with many layers of paint and with the sparks flying from the Noronic was in danger of becoming a raging inferno herself. Alert to this possibility, Joe and three others, none of whom were sailors managed to take the Kingston out into the bay and out of harms way *thereby preventing an even greater tragedy.*

Upon graduating from the University of Toronto's School of Optometry Joe spent his first year as a full fledged optometrist in Northern Ontario. The following Summer, August 5, 1950 he and Daisy married and moved to Windsor with Joe taking a position with a well known local optometrist, Harry Bass.

Four years later they purchased property in St. Clair Beach and built the present house at 204 Pentilly Lane. Joe did much of the construction himself, particularly the interior cabinets and finishings. At that time theirs was the third house on the street and their arrival caused the population of St. Clair Beach Village to ~~swell~~ *MUSHROOM* to 400 inhabitants.

The fifties was also a time when Joe was a member of the Table #1 Investors Club which held meetings at Mario's Restaurant on Ouellette Avenue. Presumably the club members made great sums of money with their investments. However, more important to Daisy and Joe as newcomers to the Windsor area were the lifelong friendships they forged which have endured up to the present day.

Somewhat later in their marriage Robert arrived and a new chapter was opened for the McCann family. The residence was expanded to accommodate the new arrival and Daisy's mother came down from Toronto to help with the new addition to the household. Again Joe was very active in the construction of the addition using his carpentry skills to good advantage.

On a more personal level, my wife Bev and I had no possible way of knowing in 1975 that the realtor who was showing the house at 190 Pentilly had neglected to mention one of the most important attributes of the property. That was that the house came with the most generous, most gracious, most amazing neighbours that one could possibly imagine and that for thirty years they would be there for us in any capacity at the drop of a hat whenever and wherever we needed them.

As the years passed and our family took shape Joe had a special place in my ^{younger} son Aaron's heart. I think that Joe reminded him of his own grandfather because they both had a gentle disposition toward young children, could fix almost anything and they both had a lot of white hair. I remember when Aaron was two or three years old and beginning to expand his horizons in the neighbourhood. Aaron was always very interested in going outside to see Joe. Aaron became Joe's shadow and whenever Joe was doing his yardwork Aaron would be at his heels. We often wondered if Joe might be irritated by this intrusion but Joe in his infinite patience was always willing to stop and explain to Aaron exactly what he was doing and how he was doing it. Satisfied, Aaron would return home and announce that he had been helping Joe.

Our two boys never called the McCanns Dr. McCann or Mr. and Mrs. McCann. We always wondered if we should allow this breach of etiquette to continue but in the final analysis it seemed only right that both the boys should continue to greet our neighbours as Joe and Daisy.

The longer Bev and I knew Joe, the more we regarded him as a remarkable human being. I have always considered Joe as an

expert on the flora and fauna of St. Clair Beach. If an insect was devouring my shrubs or trees, I could count on Joe to identify the intruder, either on the spot or after consulting a large book he kept in his library. The same was true for unusual birds, the occasional larger than usual snake or the unique callings of baby owls coming from the trees. Joe has always been in tune with his natural surroundings and until his mid-eighties took care of the grass, trimmed shrubs and pruned the trees which surround his home. After a bad storm, again in his advanced years he would appear with his red chain saw ready to clear away the fallen branches and debris.

He was a superior carpenter and at a time in his life when most men would be sitting in a rocking chair he replaced an old wire-mesh fence on his property with a fine, professional grade wooden structure. In his younger years Joe used his carpenters talents as a means of expressing his love for his young son Robert. With Robert's help, he fashioned a superb tree house in a large tree in the McCann front yard. From its window Robert and his friends had exquisite vistas of Beachgrove golf course and could let their imaginations run wild.

In his mid-eighties, Joe continued to be my optometrist and shared a practice in LaSalle with Rob Charron. Clearly Joe had found an appropriate career in 1949. In his younger years Joe had maintained two offices and also served as the treasurer of the Ontario Optometrical Association. At the time of his retirement at eighty-five Joe had scaled his work load down

to two or three days a week as a concession to his advanced age.

Joe's retirement permitted the McCanns to do some well-deserved travelling. As a younger couple they had been active canoeists both locally and in such remote locations as the Lake of the Woods and the Rainy River districts of Ontario. They had also done considerable sailing until a wayward mast caused Daisy's shoulder to be dislocated, effectively putting an end to their sailing and canoeing activities. As an avid fisherman Joe supplemented these trips by his own annual fishing excursions to Georgian Bay. He liked Georgian Bay as a fishing ground and was especially fond of Honey Harbour which was his base while in the area. Now they were able to range farther abroad, taking trips to Europe, Australia and Hong Kong. Joe also travelled extensively with Daisy in the United States, accompanying her to conventions and meetings of the Clinical Ligand Assay Society.

Joe obviously shared his father's aptitude for mechanical things and in my early years in St. Clair Beach he was quite adept at repairing cars and working under the hood. At the other end of the spectrum he became a great fan of classical music and was a frequent attendee at Windsor Symphony Orchestra concerts. He enthusiastically supported Robert's activities as a young violinist, possibly in small part because his own father Frank was a popular fiddler at country square dances in western Canada. I might add however that Robert who clearly was the apple of his father's eye received Joe's loving support in all his endeavours and has obviously thrived on it.

Joe was an avid reader and while I would not characterise him as a political animal, he did have an interest in politics and has many political biographies in his library. At the time of the Charlottetown Accord, ^{AUG. 1992} Joe and I held lengthy discussions as to the merits of the referendum. ^{OCT. 28/92} As a Professor of Canadian History, I found him to be particularly knowledgeable about Mackenzie King, Paul Martin Sr. and Pierre Trudeau. As a westerner he was also quite familiar with William Aberhart and R.B. Bennett.

In recent years Robert has had the good fortune to witness two significant events in his parents' lives. One was the anniversary of their fifty years of commitment to one another in a loving and enduring marriage. The other was the celebration of his father's ninety years in a wonderful and very productive life. Robert will always have enduring memories of these milestones to take with him into his future.

Joe McCann was a true role model and an inspiration to all who knew him and he will be remembered for his zest for life and his courage under extremely difficult circumstances which he exhibited until the very end.

The famous comedian Bob Hope in saying goodbye to his good friend and fellow comic Jack Benny in 1974 said "He was stingy to the end. He ^{gave} ~~give~~ us only eighty years and it wasn't enough". Joe McCann gave us ninety years but even so for us it was not enough.