MEMORIAL SPEECH

FOR

ANNETTE BOSSERT

Hello everyone, and thank you for being here today listen as we share some thoughts and memories of my father, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. As all of you know, my father was a real character-larger than life in many ways; the kind of person that tended to fly by the seat of his pants. He had an incredible and vividly active imagination, and his timing proved to be kind of flawless, down to his last breath. Although he died just eight hours shy of his 81st birthday, he went exactly how he would have chosen. He had a sudden heart attack and that was it. No fuss, no long drawn out illness. He died on his own terms and that is really a gift and a testimony to who he was and how he lived his life.

Although we were close in my younger years, for the last ten years or so, time and circumstance divided us, but I always knew he’d be there, sending me quotes and newspaper articles, and chronicles of the lives and stories that inspired him. The comedian Bob Monkhouse once said of his father, “He only hit me once, but that was with a Volvo.” (**Wait for the laugh**). I don’t remember my father ever hitting me, but he certainly left an indelible impression!!

And it’s those impressions of him that will stay with me forever. When I say that he was a “fly by the seat of his pants” kind of guy, I mean it in the best way possible. His spontaneity and ability to think quickly and creatively knew no bounds… really. Once of my favorite memories of him demonstrates his ingenuity and resourcefulness. At one point, when the lodge was poorly staffed, Dad had to wear many hats. I don’t know how he managed, but I remember he had to cook breakfast while also checking people out of their rooms. But he was a creative problem solver before the term was even coined, and as the guests piled into the dining room for breakfast, he wooed and enticed them to enjoy the legendary “family style” breakfast!! The guests felt special and no one knew the behind the scenes “dish.” He was the only one in the kitchen and it was much easier to bring out plates each full of eggs and sausages and toast and hash browns and pancakes and call it “family style.” I admit-it was a simple, clever, and enthusiastic solution, but that’s who he was. Of course it was never a wonder to me why that place couldn’t make any money…he must have really piled up those offerings for family style breakfasts!!

He had a vivid imagination and encouraged us to think graphically. I remember I had to give a speech at my high school graduation, and as I struggled to work on it, I asked him for help. I can hear him so clearly, even now, as he said, “All you have to do babe is paint a picture, set the scene.” I hope I’m doing that for all of you today.

I realize that my dad inspired me to expand my awareness of almost everything in the world…. let’s face it, when one grows up with family vacations consisting of Dad gathering us all together in the living room and challenging us with, “Okay, first one around the world without leaving the living room wins,” the imagination really blossoms. Of course many fathers demonstrate active imaginations in different ways. Rodney Dangerfield once said, “I’m so ugly, my father carries around the picture of the kid that came with his wallet.” (**Wait for the laugh**) My father taught us to create something from nothing. He taught us to stretch our minds and go to places we’d never been. I will also never forget the conversation we had, right in my kitchen, a few months ago, with Dad explaining that NASA is about to reveal everything they know about aliens. Truth? Fiction? Conspiracy Theory? I don’t know, but it made me think and I was reminded to paint a picture in my head.

Rare was the time in the past ten years that I would get an actual letter from my Dad, but he communicated in his own special way. How many newspaper articles would he send to me, each one with notes and missives scrawled in the margins, explaining the intention in sending each one, and why he thought I needed to read these varied bits and bytes of information. And when it wasn’t a newspaper article, there was a photo…or ten… in the mail. It didn’t matter that they were out of focus or printed on the wrong side of the paper…he didn’t mind…he just wanted me to have the reference and the wisdom or humor of the quote he’d scribble on the back. He’d just gather up those pictures and throw them in the mail, and at the other end, there would be me, included in the experience. I never really had to worry about what I might not have seen at a family function, because soon after, the package would arrive with Dad’s photojournalistic testimony! And thanks to the advent of technology, once my sister Michelle convinced him to evolve from print to digital, there was no stopping him!! Talk about a boom in productivity!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). As I look back, I can honestly say that it was all very fitting for a man who encouraged each one of us kids to “paint a picture, set a scene.”

He was a creative problem solver, a man who really knew how to think on his feet, a man who believed in the life of the mind…. and **duck tape**. My next fondest memory was his passion for closure. Of envelopes. And packages. And the strangest things you could possibly ever imagine-all with duck tape. The man was a force to be reckoned with as his determination manifested itself in completely mummified envelopes and boxes, in fact I’m quite sure I still have a few permanently and hermetically sealed envelopes from him. There was **NO** **WAY** to open them, and now they are his legacy and will be our family’s heirlooms, like a treasured time capsule. I should probably do a collage and box frame them and tell the kids to have them opened in a hundred years! The greatest duck tape story every experienced- or told- has to do with our move from Ottawa to Calgary. Chris and I packed up the kids and Dad followed us in the station wagon packed to bursting with all of the odds and ends that didn’t fit in the moving van. Never content to just **leave**, just as we were about to set off, Dad had to run into the garage to grab the shovel we had left behind. I reminded him that Calgary was civilized, and did, indeed have shovels and we could always get another when we arrived, but Dad, being exactly who he was, wouldn’t hear of it. And like the old Monty Python skit where the guy in the restaurant takes that one last fatal bite, destined to signal the point of bursting, that shovel was going to make the trip. There really was not one inch of room. It was a scene from… I have no idea what. He had wrapped the plants in his coats to keep them from freezing, stuff was sticking out the window; it was a scene from a Rube Goldberg cartoon. We had a plan to meet five hours later for supper in a town along the way. We arrived and waited. And waited. No Dad. As I stood outside in the motel parking lot, there he was, over an hour later, commanding his “chariot,” shovel prominently and securely fastened to the roof of the station wagon with copious amounts of his beloved duck tape. The shovel made it, we made it, and I began to consider buying stock in duck tape futures. (**Wait for the laugh**).

Another outstanding memory I have of my father is his authoritative and utterly convincing attitude. He always spoke like he really knew what he was talking about, and as I child, I was a believer. Come to think of it, in some cases, I didn’t wake up and realize what was going on until I was an adult-like a **32 year old** adult. When we were kids, my father taught Michelle and I the days of the week in Chinese… or so we were led to believe. Even as a child I questioned his “Chinese accent,” but I have to say, he was really convincing. “**Sunguy, munguy, chickachicka hunguy, alligator, fungguy, pho.”** Proud of our multilingual abilities, Michelle and I would dazzle the Chinese tourists as we ran around the Columbia ice fields chalet, demonstrating our linguistic prowess. Of course, proud parents pass their knowledge on to the next generation, and my family is no different. I had shared my “gift” with my daughter Kaylee who chose to demonstrate just how much she’s like her mother… just at the wrong time. My friend Carol Poon, a wonderful Chinese woman, came to visit and as she was preparing to leave, Kaylee came up with the brilliant idea to gleefully run up and down the stairs and hang off the bannister reciting the days of the week… in Chinese. Yes. **THAT** Chinese. Of course Carol asked what Kaylee was doing, and I replied that she was reciting the days of the week-in Chinese as taught to us by my dad. My dad was living with us at the time, and after Carol left, I walked into the kitchen, faced that tremendous feeling of betrayal, and confronted my father the polyglot. He confessed to making the whole thing up, but the sense of betrayal and reckoning could not have been complete without Michelle’s participation, so we called her up. I asked her to tell us the days of the week in Chinese, and so she began to sing out loud and proud, “sunguy, munguy, chickachicka, hunguy….I can still recall the surprise in her voice and the tears of laughter rolling down my father’s face as the “Bust” was complete and we marveled at how long that legend endured and how it was even passed down to the next generation!! And just for the record, I think my father’s Chinese is probably more colorful than the real thing!

Dr. Seuss once said, “Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind.” My father loved to express his point of view through citing famous quotes, and I think this one, to a great degree, sums up his philosophy of life. He was boldly, charmingly, and unapologetically his “own man.” A while ago, I gave my father a copy of the book, **“Ageless Body, Timeless Mind**.” As I looked through it recently, I found a quote with an asterisk drawn by my father that caught my attention. It said, “If you don’t want to catch cold, fall in love.” Most of you who really knew my dad knew that this philosophy was his best immune stimulant and his most effective antidote for the banalities of life. I suppose it’s no coincidence that he was rarely sick yet he had more coffee dates in his 70’s than most men half his age. He had a magnetic personality and met people no matter where he went. He had a way of being with people that made just about everyone feel special. As a result of his incredible gift for connection, he had friends from all around the world, and that is among the greatest gifts of his legacy. His love of images and communication was reinforced by all of the letters and cards he would receive from the friends he met. And as we know, he loved to give as much as he received-mail that is. Whether he was sending us pictures and newspaper articles or sending frequent missives to those in government, his passion for writing and supporting the post office is legendary.

In his “golden years” of retirement, he barely slowed down. He indulged his passion for travel and considered himself a feather in the wind,” and would travel far and wide-wherever that wind took him, and when he arrived, he always had the time of his life.

Charles Dickens said, “A loving heart is the truest wisdom.” If there was one thing my father, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ had was a truly loving heart. He gave me life and a place to call home. He gave me heart and inspired me to dream and laugh and to “paint a picture, set a scene.” He gave me the joys of a wonderful and unique childhood and I will always cherish the memories of all of the pictures we painted together.

Thank you.