

Walter Charles Swabuk

November 05, 1920 – May 25, 2005

Death Location:

Grove Park Home, Barrie, ON

Worked For:

Orenda

Obituary (online):

SWABUK, Walter Charles 05/11/1920–25/05/2005* B. in Portage La Prairie, MB, on Nov. 5, 1920, the son of John (b. in Europe) and Ann McCoskey (b. in Poland) Swabuk. The family would include five girls and five boys: Jack (Michael), Steve, May, Walter, Stan, Violet, Rose, Bernice, Jean, and Allen. At the time of his death, Walter was predeceased by Jack, Steve, May, and Allen. From 1942–1945 Walter served overseas with a RCAF groundcrew: he worked on Spitfires, Hurricanes; he “only did checks” on the P-51 Mustang. In fact, his education was in agriculture—after the War he graduated in “ag” from the U. of Manitoba. Walter moved from Winnipeg to Timmins, then to Toronto. Walter met Joyce through relatives in Hamilton in 1950. Daughter June records in her eulogy for her dad: ... mom says that dad told her he knew right away he would marry her. But Mom needed more convincing than one date, so she waited until he could show her that it was “meant to be.” Unfortunately, I believe some of his courting ways involved falling in mud and the memorable luncheon, where, driving back home he had to pull his car over to be sick at the side 337 of the road. Shortly thereafter, my mother thought “this man’s a keeper!” After 54 years, she was absolutely right. It is hard to characterize the essence of my father, but there was something charismatic about him that drew people instantly to him: one of his favourite phrases was “this is my friend,” followed closely by mention of his family. Walter and Joyce were married in Barrie on May 24, 1951. He worked for Orenda jet engines in Malton, which powered the Avro Arrow. When the Arrow programme was cancelled in 1960—do not mention that Prime Minister’s name!—the Swabuks moved to Montreal where Walter worked for Pratt & Whitney, then for Air Canada. He retired from his job as a jet engine inspector in 1981. The move to Montreal meant that Donald (b. 1955, m. Debbie; lives in Bradford) and June (b. 1957; lives in Scarborough) got to grow up in Montreal and become fluent in French culture. June recalls her childhood: The memories I have of my dad always seem to involve some family activity. He used to pull my brother and me on rugs up and down the hardwood floor, to endless squeals of delight—his capacity to entertain was boundless. At a time when planned activities for children mostly involved being outside to play, we were fortunate to be enrolled in swimming, Scouts and Guides, with dad becoming a Scout leader, and, among other things, skiing. Now, my father and I shared the same skiing style as the Canadian ski team; apparently, the object was to climb to the top of the hill and then barrel straight down until, with a great sigh of relief, we would finally stop. Needless to say, I no longer ski. We used to go on a lot of camping trips, and I think the backing up of the tent trailer was a source of weekend humour for many on our street. In 1982 the Swabuks returned to Toronto, and subsequently to Barrie where Walter took up the hobby of woodcarving, joining the Barrie Woodcarvers Club. Walter carved; Joyce painted—they did beautiful work. In “retirement” there were lots of trips and enjoyable times with family, reflected in their collection of photos. A stroke initiated a new phase of Walter’s life in 2002. He went to live at Creedan Valley, in Creemore, and, through determined exercise regained most of the use of his left side. In April 2004 life became easier when he came to live at GPH: their home is just up Cook St. at number 278 and Joyce was easily able to visit, so they would spend their days together, Walter’s outgoing nature easily making them friends among residents and staff. Walter died of another, serious, stroke. My meditation at his funeral was entitled, “He died rich,” because his life was rich in love, family, experiences and travel. GPH: 20/04/2004—A1161

https://www.grovetparkhome.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Connections_3_2003-2012.pdf

Researched by: Barry Copp (2023)