

George Frederick Ferguson's Legacy Story

"I would just like to think I passed through this era, this world, and hopefully made something a little better for the average person". So said George when asked how he would like to be remembered.



George was born in Vancouver on July 5, 1925 to immigrants from Ireland who later farmed on Sumas Prairie. George attended schools in Abbotsford, served in WW II, married Betty, lived in California, returned to Abbotsford, bought his parents' farm in 1959, continued as a dairy farmer and raised 11 children. After Betty's death in 1991, George married Ria in 2000. He died on March 7, 2017, aged 91, with Ria at his side in the farm house of his childhood.

George was a man of quiet faith. He was modest, he worked hard. He often said, "don't forget the misfortunate amongst us". He reminded us to be good stewards of the land, the air, the water and to look after the animals. He never accumulated wealth but donated frequently and quietly.

George was a people person. With an Irish twinkle in his eye he respected all he met but always with a deep understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

He loved his family. As George Jr said, "To us, he was just our Dad. We loved him, he loved us. He expected and taught us to work as hard as he and our mother did." Life in the Ferguson household was busy. Farming was a family affair with everyone active in running the farm business. It was a lot of work but there was always time for Hockey Night in Canada, baseball games in the summer and table hockey in the winter.

George was a long time elected public servant with a legendary political biography. Starting in the late 1960's, George served on the parks board and thereafter as an alderman and mayor of District of Sumas, and after amalgamation into the District of Abbotsford in 1972 as its only mayor to 1994, and after amalgamation into the City of Abbotsford, as mayor from 1994 to 2002 and from 2005 to 2008.

He served his community, province, and country by working on and chairing many boards: hospital, infrastructure, water and air quality, and airport boards to name a few. George was elected president of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Methodically, at a pace which the public could accept, George took Fraser Valley farming communities and transformed them into the city in the country which Abbotsford had become when he died. He laid the foundation for what is to come of his community.

He lived by his often repeated wisdom which was that he, and each elected official, was a servant of the people.

Some quotes from others who with him served the public:

“My mentor George Ferguson was truly a ‘man of the people’. He had confidence, but not arrogance and never lost his humility. His door was open to anyone, literally. His legacy is his alone – his mentorship. He taught us to lead with dignity, intelligence, compassion, hard work and respect.” Councilor Patricia Ross.

“He has never been a one-man show and as Mayor he always put the team first. He has been a great inspiration to me.” Hon. Ed Fast, P.C., Q.C., M.P.

“He could get up on a tractor and compete in a plowing match or milk a cow by hand and he could meet the queen.” former Mayor George Peary

“You can’t walk more than a block anywhere in Abbotsford today without seeing some piece of infrastructure that’s a George Ferguson legacy.” Mike de Jong, Q.C., MLA.

“With integrity and passion, George proudly advocated for our community. The dairy farmer from Sumas Prairie who played a leading role in this community over four decades, never had a hint of scandal, which is a rarity to be sure. My last words to him the day before he died were, ‘Thank you.....and will see you on the other side.’” Henry Braun, Mayor

George Frederick Ferguson, family man, farmer, exemplary politician and proud Canadian.

A true servant of the people who in his time made life better for the average person.

Very good!