

Eulogy for Charles Buchanan

Eulogy: To be presented by Dan Buchanan at the Memorial Service for his father, Rev. Charles Buchanan

Date/Time: 11 am, Friday, June 22, 2012

Place: John R. Bush Funeral Home, Belleville

Good morning. I would like to provide a biographical sketch of Charles Buchanan. He was born on September 11, 1925 in Colborne. His parents were William Buchanan and Bertha Goodfellow. Charles had only one sibling, Bernice, who was nine years his senior.

Charles was a good kid. He did well in school but was not bookish. In 1940, at age 15, Charles went to live and work for the summer at his uncle's farm in Mount Olivet. This happened for two years as he attended high school. He had been around the farm many times before so it was familiar territory and he liked his aunt, uncle and cousins. As Dad often said regarding the farm work, "I jumped in with both feet, right up to my neck!". He said he "Developed muscles in places he didn't know he had places".

Then in 1943, Bill Goodfellow was elected MPP for Northumberland County and Charles moved to the farm permanently as the full time hired man. His uncle would be away during the week in Toronto and would come back home on the weekends. With lots of hard work and help from his uncle and others in the community, young Charles Buchanan succeeded in becoming a farmer and a respected member of the community.

During the mid-1940s, there was another story line developing. This had to do with a young lady named Mary Ames who lived on the farm just north of Codrington. They were both members of the very active Young Peoples Association related to the church and over time Charles and Mary would gain each other's trust and a relationship developed.

By 1949, the two young people decided it was time to marry. Mary's parents, Lloyd and Louise Ames, were in agreement so, on July 14, 1949, Charles Buchanan and Mary Ames were married at the Codrington United Church. This wedding meant big changes. Lloyd and Louise purchased a house in Codrington and moved in so that the farm house was available for the newlyweds – and the family that was anticipated. The young couple did not disappoint. In May of 1950, Mary Lou was born; in March of 1951 was my turn; Lloyd was born in July 1954 and Ruth Anne in Feb 1958.

This was a busy time. The family was growing and the farm was improving. In the midst of all this farm and family activity, however, another type of activity also grew. To start with, Mother and Dad were both heavily involved in Sunday School, including both teaching and administration. At different times, each would perform the duties of Superintendent. Mother was also involved in the Women's Institute and the Eastern Star. Dad was involved in the School Board for a time and took a keen interest in the Soil Crop Association. He was also very active in the Masonic Lodge, eventually achieving the position of Past District Deputy Grand Master in the Percy Lodge in Warkworth. You can see here his apron and 50 and 60 year pins.

As the 1950s moved along, our Dad increased his involvement in the Church. He started out as an Elder and we often saw him passing the collection plate. Then, he started doing small tasks to help the minister. We thought it was very cool that Dad would tell the story for the children when they gathered at the front of the church before going down to Sunday School. At other times he would read scripture or announcements from the pulpit.

At some point, he began conducting the full service when the minister was on holidays or ill. At first, it was a real novelty but, after it happened a few times, it became expected. He did such a good job that people began to anticipate the next

Eulogy for Charles Buchanan

time he would appear. After a while, word got around and people in other congregations asked him to fill in at their church. Over time, it became a routine thing.

Dad also began to spend a lot more time in the den off the kitchen. It was a small, cold room with a large desk, usually strewn with papers, a large vinyl rocking chair and a book shelf full of bibles and what Dad called "Commentaries". In the evening after supper and chores, the kids would go to their rooms to do homework and Dad would go to the den and work on his sermons.

In the mid-1960s the people at Dundonald asked him to take their church for an indefinite period. He jumped at the chance but he had one concern. Until then, he had often prepared one sermon to use at several different churches but now he would have to come up with a new, fresh sermon EVERY SUNDAY! He was at Dundonald for 18 months and it seems both minister and congregation were very pleased with the results.

Every family experiences tragedy and ours happened in 1967 when our mother was taken from us on December 4. It was a huge blow to the family and community. Her roles as wife, mother and daughter were critical to the fabric of the family and we struggled over the next years to make our way forward. There was lots of help from family and community and we managed.

As the 1970's dawned, Dad took action towards becoming an ordained minister. With assistance and encouragement from Harry Ewing, at E.N.S.S., he obtained credits he would need to apply to university. With the help of Rev. Charlie McLaren, he applied to Queen's Theological College and was accepted. At the same time he set in motion the sale of the farm which happened in November 1973.

Also in these years, Dad would develop a relationship with Shirley Taylor of Brighton and on May 19, 1973, they were married at Trinity St. Andrew's United Church in Brighton. Dad would often say that this was one of the smartest things he ever did, and we can't disagree. For almost 40 years they have been a terrific team!

Just as Dad was planning to attend university in Kingston, the minister at Smithfield and Carman died suddenly and Rev. Charlie McLaren asked Dad if he would lend his support. In the end, an arrangement was struck which brought Dad and Shirley to live in the manse in Smithfield. He would attend classes in Kingston and also work as a student minister for Smithfield and Carman churches.

We must mention that the three years Dad attended university in Kingston demonstrated the teamwork that would be evident from then on. Dad always had the problem of poor hand writing. He called it "Hen scratches" and was well aware that not even he could read his own writing. They worked out a system where Dad dictated notes and Shirley did the typing. It worked like a charm!

In June of 1976 we attended a wonderful event at Cooke's Portsmouth United Church in Kingston. It was a beautiful church, everyone was dressed to the nines and there were lots of happy folks. Buttons were busting that day. We were so proud to congratulate Dad on being the first one in our family to graduate from university. It was a major accomplishment! Reverend Charles Buchanan; it had a nice ring to it.

Rev. Buchanan's first assignment was in Millbrook which lasted for two years. This situation was a bit of a fixer-upper and required all the experience and skill that he could bring to the work. After two years things were better and Rev. Buchanan and Shirley could move on knowing they had made a positive contribution.

Eulogy for Charles Buchanan

Then, in 1978, Rev. Buchanan took on the Roslin and Thomasburg Charge north of Belleville. They bought a house on 37 Highway north of the 401 and settled in to enjoy an excellent situation. Over 12 years the people in the two congregations learned to appreciate the work of Rev. Buchanan and the support provided by Shirley. In this place, Charles Buchanan truly realized his dream of being a minister in rural churches in a comfortable and supportive environment.

In May 1990 we attended a retirement party at Thomasburg United Church. Rev. Charles Buchanan was turning 65 and it was time to retire. The outflowing of affection and appreciation in that church basement was overwhelming. We started to get a small idea of the feeling folks had for Rev. Charles and Shirley.

After retirement, Dad and Shirley purchased a condo on Haig Road, on the east side of Belleville. In May of 1991, he then began his role as Chaplin at Belleville General Hospital. It's hard to imagine putting yourself in the room where people are having the worst day of their lives, but Rev. Buchanan seemed to have a knack for it. Many people have told us stories of how he comforted a loved one in the hospital. In this role, Rev. Buchanan was appreciated by patients and hospital staff alike.

During the 1990s and into the 2000s Rev. Buchanan extended his ministry to include several engagements with area churches. The list includes North Trenton, King St., Trenton, Grace, Rednersville and Albury and Trinity in Madoc. Also, Charles and Shirley were members of the College Hill church in Belleville. In addition to supporting the hospital and the churches, Rev. Buchanan performed many marriages and funerals. He was in demand. Dad loved his work during this time. There was lots of variety and he had some freedom to say "No" if he wanted to, but, as Shirley would say, "We very seldom said no." In fact, the priority was always the church he was associated with at the time. Shirley ran a tight ship on the scheduling and administration side and Rev. Buchanan was delighted to keep working.

In September 2005 we threw an 80th Birthday Party for Dad which drew a large crowd. He was a bit reluctant to be reminded of his age and didn't fancy all the fuss being made, but he was appreciative of the tributes and expressions of appreciation. It was also a great way to get family together for an event other than the kind we are attending today.

Rev. Buchanan kept working well into his 80's. In 2010, he was able to attend several events, very much as his old self. I was at the Carman United Church Anniversary service where he spoke eloquently and passionately about his connection with that place. It was an impressive performance.

The life of Charles Buchanan is an inspiration to me. He had the dream of becoming a minister. He worked hard, took risks and made it happen. His work as a minister touched many lives, many more than we will know. He was persistent in his goal of providing comfort and support through his ministry. We can be grateful for his presence among us.