

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Clifford Gambell ? Remembered

By Stephen Somerville

For those loyal readers you will recall in my last column that I provided an update on Cliff and Pat Gambell after I received an e-mail from their daughter Andrea. I had interviewed Cliff and Pat for this column back in 2007.

Andrea reached out to let me know that her dad passed away on February 27 at the young age of 99 and that her Mom had passed away in August 2014, after having been married for 71, yes, 71 years.

Meeting

Andrea's parents has been one of the great pleasures of this volunteer columnist position.

Cliff was a great story teller and you could tell how much he adored Pat.

They both loved long and fulfilling lives surrounded by the ones they loved, which I think is all that one can hope for.

What follows is some of the brief excerpts from the eulogies that Andrea and Cliff's grandson David gave at the funeral.

From Andrea:

?How do you share a lifetime of memories in a few minutes? Of course, the answer is you can't but I wanted to speak today to let you know a little bit about the wonderful man that was my Dad.

?I was born to Mom and Dad after they were married for nearly twenty years. They had two teenage daughters but, no, I was not an accident!

?Coming into the family in what I consider the 'sweet spot' had its advantages. Thanks to my sisters, these parents were well broken in and it seems that I got away with a lot more than they ever did.

?I also spent a lot of time with Dad. Around the time I was born Dad became a mechanic and opened his station on Avenue Road and Bedford Park. I spent many Saturday and Sundays and summers working there with Dad. Back then they did not have any child labour laws and at 10 or 11, I was out pumping gas and checking oil.

?Mom and Dad were married for 71 years.

As you can imagine there were times when they had a tiff or two and as I recall it, it was Dad that usually had to make the first move. He would walk up to Mom, put his arm around her, and say, ?Give me a kiss and tell me you're sorry.' Mom could never resist that and the disagreement was over.?

From David:

?Now, Grandad was not just great at building a business and fixing cars with military precision; he could build and fix just about anything.

?He built the garage at their home on St. Germaine, he built and finished an amazing rec room, he could shingle a roof, and he cut the grass with such attention to detail that Pat used to comment that he measured each individual blade of grass to make sure they were all the same height.

?After retirement, Grandad and Mother spent 20 great winters in Florida. They were like teenagers in their retirement community and we all loved to visit and we all have great memories of their wonderful home that was flawlessly wall-papered and it had the most pristine garage ever seen.

?When Pat passed away, Grandad was devastated. He never imagined that she would be the first to go. But since that time, all of his great qualities have been on display.

?He remained a true gentleman. At the retirement home he had all his meals with three ladies, all named Mary. He would help the three Marys to their seats at every meal and line up their walkers for them at the end of every meal. And he would regale them with great stories to keep them entertained at all times ? his entire life he was a great storyteller, never missing a detail, and that quality stayed true to the end of his days.

?Grandad had a positive outlook on life and it was evident right to the end.

?He told us he would make it to 100. We had a 99th birthday celebration for him on December 22. At the end of the party he said, ?Well, I hate to have to tell you this but you are all going to have to do this again next year.' His new goal was to make it to 105.

?He will live forever in our hearts as he was kind, caring and a true gentleman. He was

delighted to see his eight great grandchildren, seven grandchildren, three sons-in-law and three daughters come to visit. They were all very special to him and he loved to give and get a big hug.?

I end this column with the final moving, heart-felt words from Andrea:

?Dad you're back with Mom now. I imagine you wrapped your arms around her, gave her a kiss and said sorry I've been a bit, but I was trying to finish what I started and get to 100 years old.

?Dad, we will miss you always, love you forever.

?Always in our hearts until we are together again.?

Stephen can be contacted at stephengsomerville@yahoo.com