



Bruce G. Mackle
April 11, 1933 - July 5, 2016

BRUCE MACKLE MEMORIAL SERVICE

Remarks by State Sen. Lisa Baker
July 12, 2016

Today we celebrate a kind, and gentle man who devoted his life to making our community a better place. Bruce Mackle would be pleased and proud, and deeply humbled by the outpouring of love, support and kindness shown to Carolyn, Debbie and Steve, and the entire family, from his wide circle of friends. This circle extended well beyond Wayne County because he touched people throughout NEPA and beyond.

Whether you knew Bruce for five minutes or 50 years, you automatically became his friend. He had a rare and special gift in his ability to make a friend and to be a friend.

Whether he fixed your car, sold you a dog license or a ticket to the Lions Bonanza, or stood beside you in his beloved church serving pancakes, Bruce affected all of our lives in a significant and impactful way.

We often talk about old fashioned values – showing neighborliness, respecting tradition, trusting one another, serving just to do things right, finding different ways to contribute to building up the community – as though they are nostalgia items, something to be seen at the Wayne County Historical Society, right next to Bruce's beloved milk bottle collection.

Yet these virtues were the central themes of our dear friend and colleague Bruce. He was a devoted family man, a dedicated employee, a good neighbor, a tireless volunteer and a true servant-leader in every sense of the word.

When we convinced him to come out of retirement to serve in the newly created district office, Bruce fretted that he couldn't do the job as my field representative. I think he called everyone he knew and asked their advice, including many of you who are here today – we all know that Bruce worried just a tiny, tiny, little bit?!

He told me, "I don't know computers and I won't be good for the position." Not only was he good for the position, he was exceptional. He offered a personal touch to people – sat in their kitchen and tried to help solve their problems. Bruce was responsive, dedicated and professional. Yes, he was exceptional. Turned out, he did learn the computer as well, along with figuring out email too. But his real computer storage was found in the cases and cases of post-it-notes he used to keep track of everything. Yellow stickie notes were everywhere. You couldn't find the top of the desk, but Bruce could always find the note and the details on his post-it.

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The naming of the General Tallman Bridge was one of Bruce's proudest accomplishments. He devoted hours and hours to this vital community project. He saw to every detail from the passage of the legislation, to the construction and placement of the signs, to the beautiful dedication ceremony that gave honor to the family of the last General killed in the Vietnam War. He checked, rechecked and triple checked, and worried, and worried and worried some more. Somehow, if he thought of all that could go wrong, it was under control. He knew what to expect and had it all covered. Every time I drive over the bridge, I smile and think of Bruce. I hope you do as well.

We associate the Greatest Generation with World War II veterans and their families. But those such as Bruce who served during the Korean War period demonstrated the same admirable values and devotion. We owe them for their service, example and guidance. Typical of Bruce, he never spoke of his awards or medals from serving in the 10th Mountain Division. He didn't brag about his accomplishments. Steve told me that it was only discovered last week from the notation on his DD-214.

Bruce had a vast amount of insight and wisdom that only comes from life experience that is wide and deep. As typical of his generation he was proud of his family – his kids and grandkids. He would not miss a chance to bring them up, share stories and offer detailed updates. Of course, typical of his generation, he probably forgot to tell Debbie and Steve that as often as he should have. But make no mistake, Bruce adored you and there is no doubt he loved you and was so proud of you. He liked the people you had become, what you accomplished in life - the fact that you were a good husband and a good wife, and most of all great parents. He adored Andy and LeeAnn, as well.

He delighted in talking about Nick, Evan, Michael, Justin, Jake and Nathan. During his last visit to the Dallas Office, he got on the computer to show everyone where the boys were living and working. The summer was his favorite time because he also had a chance to go fishing and to have lunch with the "little" guys. You were all very special to him.

Carolyn - we always smiled when Bruce joked about "this here wife I have now!" But we know that he was looking forward to celebrating his 60th Anniversary in January. You both wondered what final retirement would bring. I know he missed his colleagues and the people he helped, but he enjoyed finally being around home – tinkering and fussing and futzing.

As Lois said, Bruce was a wonderful brother – he couldn't do enough for his sisters Lois, Jean and Grace. Always there to lend a helping hand or to offer support.

After I lost my dad in 1996, I had the distinct privilege to turn to a special friend who became a second father to me. I want to thank Debbie and Steve for sharing their dad with me. Bruce has meant the world to us. Gary, Carson and I have cherished our friendship, and we loved him too.

In his many roles, Bruce touched a lot of people, not just my family. Because of his innate optimism and can-do spirit, he brought light into our lives. In this contentious world we find ourselves living in, it is difficult to see someone so filled with cheerfulness, grace and humor depart from our midst. We can all be forgiven for wondering who will take his place, for his qualities are not common.

So today, we can picture where Bruce is "as we speak" and only wish that we had a direct line to 1-800-ASK-BRUCE because we had too much left unsaid and too many questions left unanswered.

We know he has already connected with the people he cared about – with his parents, brother Flynn, sister Lucille, Reg Wayman, Earl Simons, Don Chapman, Dan O'Neill and even his pony, Alice, who Kay said was allowed to eat pie from the kitchen table.

Will we miss him? In the words of Bruce Mackle - "You right well know it!" However, our best tribute to Bruce is not to lament about what we have lost, rather it is to reflect on and to appreciate, how much we gained by how well Bruce lived and spent his time here on earth. He showed us the way. Now it is our turn to follow.

Today, we say rest well, dear friend. Until we meet again.