

George Ferguson

What to say about George? Certainly, no one could accuse him of having been a loving son, brother, or father. He'd gladly have stolen the shirt off your back and he was generous to a fault with other people's money. Was he a small-time con-man with grandiose schemes? Probably. But another view of him is that he was the most exciting member of his family and of the families he married into. He was a poor man's rhetorician who beguiled certain women into buying into his promises and dreams. This latter view is lent some support by the fact that he was a United Church minister who passionately improvised sermons for congregations in Quesnel, Barkerville, Bella Bella, Greenwood, Nipawin, Sask. and Kelowna. It is impossible to say whether or not George was actually religious. Anyway, God's name rarely came up when George was flush. George eventually became one of Oak Bay's characters. In the 1970's, he was an owner of the Blethering Place, along with his second wife, Janet. They also started the Old Blighty on Oak Bay Ave. They owned an antique store on the corner of Oak Bay and Foul Bay and they even had an auction, at which George was notable for having a parrot on his shoulder. One of his best stories was about being in his car with his new friend Chris in the seat beside him when it was suddenly surrounded by heavily-armed police officers. This was the beginning of the famous Rocancourt arrest scene of 2001. Some of George's favourite watering holes were the Oak Bay Beach Hotel, the Oak Bay Golf Club, and the Marina. Of late, George had to travel to and from these places on his senior's scooter, which he drove as recklessly – and sometimes as drunkenly – as he had driven his cars in earlier years. George was always an optimist about his future. Right up until the aftermath of his last surgery, he hoped that he could get into sufficiently good shape to charm another woman into supporting him, or perhaps invent something that would make him a billionaire or maybe even win the lottery! He never complained about his later lot in life,

living cheerfully in a small apartment that was just barely on the right side of the Tweed Curtain. While George did not live well by some people's lights, it should be universally accepted that he did die well. In hospital, two days beforehand, he said he'd finished with the medical procedures he had been avidly seeking for the past few years; he said he was 'checking out'. He was completely calm and committed to the decision. The next day, we brought in some beer, toasted his life with him, drank with him, and helped him to make several thoughtful good-bye phone calls. He reminisced a bit and gave us a few unhelpful instructions. He died without pain the next evening, from a slow gastric bleed, with his wits about him and a light heart. Turns out, his timing was impeccable: the next day we found out that he had been racking up ominous bank and credit card debts. Clearly, those supplemental incomes were about to dry up. In earlier years, George would sometimes slip out of a town after he had accumulated local debts and after the relevant woman's purse had been snapped shut. But of late, he was in no condition to skip town. And women just don't see old men on scooters as the stuff of their dreams – they see them as impending burdens. Perhaps George felt cornered. Perhaps he thought that, under his present circumstances, dying was the only way out. Whatever the story, no one can deny that George made his final exit with style and grace. Condolences may be offered to the family below.

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