

R.G.S. (BOB) CURRIE
1921-1987

The following eulogy was delivered by Tom Beck, immediate past chairman of the Arctic Institute's Board, at R.G.S. (Bob) Currie's memorial service, July 16, 1987, at Scarboro United Church, Calgary, Alberta:

We are here to pay tribute to the memory of Bob Currie, who passed away July 13, 1987.

Many of us knew Bob as a frank and forthright oilman. Starting with 18 years' service at Imperial Oil, then at the corporate level with Panarctic Oils, B.C. Resources and most recently with Parex, it is hard for some people to think of Bob outside of his role as a businessman. And what a businessman — you had to contend with him rather than deal with him! His prowess in land negotiations is known throughout industry and government, here and abroad. A Bob Currie trademark was playing the role of devil's advocate. By looking deliberately at the different sides of a problem, he had an uncanny knack of finding the right solution. And once found, he got on with it: a proper job done or none at all! Given his energy and individuality, Bob didn't like to stand still. He liked new challenges and pursued them with vigour.



Bob Currie (right) and Mike Robinson, Executive Director of the Arctic Institute, at the May 26, 1987, dinner for friends of the Institute in Calgary.

But there is far more to Bob than the legacy of his business career. A Bob Currie fewer people perhaps knew was a quiet patron to carefully chosen causes, such as summer jobs for neighbourhood youths, career guidance for people with the ability to succeed in business, the Arctic Institute of North America and a string of selfless acts for friends who needed help.

It is in the service of his friends especially that Bob's generosity of spirit rings through. This generosity of spirit found expressions in such diverse places as Grise Fiord, India and Scotland.

I remember, for example, the part that Bob and Lois played in bringing 89-year-old Scotsman William Laird McKinlay back

to the North after a 60-year absence to relive his experiences with the ill-fated 1913 Stefansson Expedition in the western Arctic.

All of us associated with the Arctic Institute will remember Bob's vision of a western base and expanded mission for the Institute (of which he was a past chairman, a governor and a fellow). It was typical of Bob that he made this vision a reality, and the Institute's continued development is a testament to his vision.

Bob was a Shriner. Typically, while he avoided the customary pomp and profile, his name regularly appeared as a contributor to worthy Shrine causes.

Many of us here will remember various acts of kindness from this man, although, because Bob found personal publicity distasteful, the full extent of his generosity will be known only to a few.

I must tell you that Bob had one flaw — he liked to eat wallpaper paste for breakfast! — porridge he called it. And nothing I could say about that vile potion would convince him it had anything but magic qualities.

Bob Currie was a Westerner. Born in Bassano, educated at UBC following World War II service in the RCAF, he was a life-long triple-dyed Conservative. Bob symbolized many of the qualities that come from old prairie families.

He loved the Rockies — which is easy to understand when you know that Bob spent his summers working there as a youth and proposed to Lois in Jasper — in fact they married there. Hiking around Lake O'Hara was a particularly favoured pastime. Bob's love of the mountains persisted — he and Lois spent his last weekend in Kananaskis with close friends.

In recent years, Bob found a substitute for the Prairies in the Gulf of Georgia aboard his boat — a delight he and Lois shared with many friends. I think the boat revealed what a softie Bob really was — fishing from the boat was frowned on, ostensibly because of "the mess." In reality, Bob, for all his reputation as a stern, hard businessman, couldn't find it in his heart to hook a salmon, much less kill a deer or an elk.

Today we all share our private memories of Bob with Lois, Gordon and Loren, Leigh and Brent and their children. Your husband and father was a gentleman who masked a big heart with a gruff business presence. He had a sense of history, studied it all his life and helped make history in Alberta and the Canadian North. Few men served their friends more loyally or their personal causes more fully. Right up to the end he met his challenges head on, and even his last adversary must be wondering where Bob Currie learned to fight!

*Tom Beck
Calgary, Alberta*