



## **Eulogies for James Duncan MacDougall**

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Dianne Moroz

Peter Stothart

Howard Green

Rob MacDougall

Beth MacDougall

Betty Jo MacDougall

**Dianne Moroz (with John Moroz):**

Duncan came to McMaster University at a time when its physical education program was designed primarily to prepare budding public-school teachers and coaches. He founded and developed the Human Performance Laboratory there, and helped build his field into a rigorous science. He also wisely hired an expert in instrumentation technology—my future husband John Moroz—to develop research and teaching laboratory systems. John and Duncan quickly became friends. The lab quickly became world-renowned.

One of Duncan's exceptional qualities as a scientist was that he had a broad yet comprehensive knowledge of a range of areas in physiology, and a natural intelligence that allowed him to easily understand and integrate complex systems. This was evident in his vast array of interests and research. Duncan conducted ground-breaking research in gravitational, neuromuscular, and thermoregulatory physiology, in cardiovascular control, human performance, muscle ultrastructure, and bone density. He could easily assess the current state of knowledge in any area and identify relevant research to further the field. It wasn't long before Duncan was in demand as a keynote speaker at international conferences. He made strong collaborations with other scientists like Digby Sale, John Sutton, and Howie Green. Duncan, Digby, John and Howie pioneered research using muscle biopsy and electron microscopy techniques. McMaster became a destination for elite athletes as we tested and trained national teams including rowers, alpine and cross-country skiers, soccer players, Judokas, gymnasts, and cyclists as well as several NHL teams including the Detroit Red Wings, Buffalo Sabres, and Vancouver Canucks.

Duncan was twice nominated for McMaster's Lifetime Achievement Award for Teaching. Under Duncan's influence, McMaster became one of the first schools to engage undergraduate students in their own research. I remember being the only undergrad to present research at the Canadian Association of Sport Sciences conference. This was due entirely to Duncan.

Duncan's easy-going, stress-free nature created a culture in his department that was collegial, casual, and relaxed. Duncan liked whistling in the hallways. John also took to whistling and I could always tell who was approaching, because Duncan whistled country tunes while John, somehow, whistled classic rock. There were lots of parties, often hosted by the MacDougalls, and we all became friends working together. Every morning and every afternoon, Duncan would wander into John's office for a coffee and casually discuss whatever happened to come up, be it current events or a current research project. John and Digby worked with Duncan every day for decades without ever an argument.

At conferences, Duncan was the life of the party; I fondly remember a night in Nova Scotia when we jumped from bar to bar until we finally found Ronnie Hawkins' club, where we danced up a storm till the early hours of the morning.

Duncan laughed easily and saw the humour in life situations and events. His approach to life and perspective seemed simply unburdened. My children still talk about the time Duncan asked them to catch fireflies and then promptly spread the fireflies across his chest in a darkened room to show them fluorescence.

Duncan valued and modeled regular exercise, recreation, and life balance. Duncan would usually run at lunch—long enough, he said, to burn the calories he would later consume in beer. And he could always be heard whistling in the halls on his way home about 5 pm each night. A world-renowned researcher, Duncan never carried a briefcase—because he never had to take work home.

To many in the fields of physiology and kinesiology, J. Duncan MacDougall was a man greatly respected and admired; an integrative physiologist who conducted impeccable, ground-breaking research. They will miss his humour, his direction, and his brilliance. To John and I, Duncan was a mentor in all aspects of life and a good friend. He and Betty-Jo even modeled parenthood and family life for us, for which we and our children are forever grateful. We will miss a man we love dearly.

## **Pete Stothart:**

I would like to say thank you to BJ and the other MacDougalls for allowing me to express my thoughts and recollections of Dunc. There is so much I could say about him; we had such a long history together.

Duncan and I met personally about 50 years ago, I believe at the home of Howie and Ilma Green. Our common academic field is kinesiology; Duncan's research focused on high performance physiology, mine on biomechanics, while we overlapped in the field of research in strength. We worked together on the Ontario Research Advisory Committee; we also advised several national teams including Rowing Canada and Cross-Country Ski Canada. Duncan had a very distinguished academic career, known internationally as a teacher and a researcher. He belonged to many professional organizations and served in several executive positions. He authored many research publications including best-selling books in fields relating to high performance athletics. He received many honours and international awards for his research.

And Duncan was a man who practiced what he professed. He lived a very fit life; he was an excellent athlete in hockey, football, track and field, hiking, fishing, boating—and he was an excellent dancer. Anyone who golfed with Dunc would tell you that to him, even golf was a fitness activity, and travel between strokes was done at a run.

For the past seventeen-plus years, Candy and I have lived at Crosby Lake, a short ten-minute drive from Dunc and BJ. Shortly after our arrival in this area, Duncan arrived at our door with a smoker, to show me how to smoke salmon and other delicious treats. From that time on, Dunc was my mentor in the smoking domain. We have close mutual friends, Howie and Ilma Green, who live in Waterloo and who have a cottage near Red Lake, Ontario. On one of our visits with the Greens at their cottage, Duncan played a practical joke on the rest of us. We were all having a nice hike along a remote, wooded road, where Howie related a story of how there had been a few sightings of black bears. On our return hike, Duncan walked ahead, which was his habit. While out of sight, he found a good hiding place and lay in wait for the rest of us to catch up. When we did, he sprang out at us with a loud bear-like roar which scared us all—particularly Ilma, who attempted to climb on top of Betty Jo. Duncan then roared with raucous laughter!

Of course, Duncan was born and bred here in Westport, where he was well known by all the locals. He was an enthusiastic explorer of the lands and forests around the area. Here he developed his love for nature and became a staunch conservationist, working with others similarly inclined. He joined the Friends of Foley Mountain and eventually served as the President of the Board for a few years. Additionally, as a cottage owner, with BJ, of an extensive 400+ acre waterfront property, Duncan was an active member of the Cottage Owners Lake Association—of which he ascended to the Presidency as well as serving as Lake Steward.

But of all the things that were close to Duncan's heart it must be said that he was, first and foremost, a husband and father. He was devoted to his family: Betty Jo, Beth, Rob, Amy, and Jamie. We know they will miss him very much. They are in our thoughts, as is he.

## **Howie Green:**

There is an Australian drinking song that starts:

I love to have a beer with Duncan  
I love to have a beer with Dunc  
We drink in moderation  
And we never ever ever get rolling drunk

It would be misleading to say that over the many, many years of our common history, I have had a beer with Duncan. It would be more accurate to indicate that I have had many, many beers with Duncan. In fact, some might declare that, I have, perhaps, on occasion, had too many beers with Duncan. But regardless of the number, all those beers, I must say, were cherished events.

Our friendship really began in the late sixties, at the University of Wisconsin, outside the Office of the Graduate Supervisor, Dr. Fran Nagle. Inside the office, I heard a strangely familiar voice. Soon to emerge was Duncan MacDougall, who, like myself, was a graduate of Queen's University, and who, like myself, was in the process of registering for doctoral studies. Although Dunc and I graduated from the same program at Queen's University and we had both played on the same football team, I had not known him well. This was about to change.

We found we had much in common. Both of us were raised in small Ontario towns. Both of us were passionately proud of that heritage and anxious to publicly share anecdotes of rural life. The bonding became even more secure as our wives, Betty Jo and Ilma, developed an exceptionally close friendship, sharing the experience of raising young children while their husbands returned to college life.

Dunc and I also shared many parallels in our professional lives. At the University of Wisconsin, we both enrolled in an exciting new program headed by Dr. Bruno Balke, who pioneered much of the original research on the science of the "active state" and the role of that "active state" in health and well-being.

Following graduation, Dunc accepted a position at McMaster University, where he spent the rest of his career. I returned to the University of Waterloo. For those unfamiliar with the geography of the area, the distance between Hamilton and Waterloo amounts to only about a 60-minute drive. Hardly an obstacle preventing regular visits between families or to obstruct "having a beer with Duncan."

These visits also allowed us to share many aspects and challenges in our professional lives, such as teaching, research, publication, grant support, etc.—all very important in an emerging discipline attempting to develop its own identity and respect. Today kinesiology,

as our discipline is commonly known, has made outstanding progress. It has clearly been demonstrated that regular exercise is a potent force in health and well-being, affecting both our physical and cognitive functions. Duncan and his colleagues must be recognized as world leaders for their research on the biology of physical activity and its role in sickness and health.

Over the years Ilma and I have often commented on the Family MacDougall and how close they are. No doubt this will be an important force of comfort in the difficult days ahead.

Perhaps the real measure of the importance of a friend like Duncan defies verbal expression. This certainly appears to apply to Ilma and I. Dunc has left us now, and there is a huge void in our lives that cannot be characterized in words. I will no longer be able to have a beer with Duncan. However, he shall always remain my friend—a relationship sustained by our memories of so many good times. Even as our memories become cloudy, I am convinced that these cherished adventures will not be eroded.

## **Rob MacDougall:**

The living room in our house in Dundas—the house that Beth, Amy, Jamie, and I grew up in—had a brown corduroy couch that made lines on your face if you slept on it. It had a wooden rocking chair decorated with a pretend bearskin rug. It had a chair that we thought of as Mom’s chair, a kind of armless lounge chair that I always thought was very stylish and elegant. But the best place to sit in our living room was Dad’s chair. You can probably picture it: a big Lazy-Boy style recliner, a classic Dad chair. It could swivel and it could rock and there was a lever to make the footrest pop out, and it was right next to the stereo. But the best thing about sitting in Dad’s chair was that, if you sat there when he wanted to sit there, he would come, stand in front of you, hold out his hand for a handshake, and say, “No hard feelings, Robbie!” And when you took his hand to shake it, he would grab your wrist and heave you out of the chair, catapulting you high into the air and across the room, where you’d land in a giggling heap. You’d never be fast enough to get up and get back into the chair before he sat down in it, but if a few of your siblings were around, they might beat him to it. So then he’d have to do it to them: “No hard feelings, Beth! No hard feelings, Amy! No hard feelings, Jamie!” And you could stretch this out indefinitely.

We called this game “No hard feelings,” because that’s what Dad always said, as if we were making up after an argument we hadn’t had. And that could probably be our family motto: “No hard feelings.” Certainly it was our Dad’s. Our family is really good at good feelings. We love each other, we make each other laugh, we don’t argue much at all. And the truth is, we’ve been lucky. Not that much hard stuff has happened to us. We don’t have nearly as much practice with hard feelings as with good ones. And I think that was one of Dad’s (and Mom’s) great gifts to us.

Dad wouldn’t want any hard feelings today. He wouldn’t want anyone to be sad for him, or sad because of him. He’d want us to get together in the sunshine, re-tell some old jokes and funny stories, drink a couple of toasts to him, hug, laugh, and call it a day. But we are sad, and that’s OK too. Because some of these feelings are hard.

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Dad was born right here in Westport in December 1941. He was born in his grandmother’s house, the little white house on Bedford Street, the same lot where Mom & Dad’s house is today. Mom was born in Manitoba in June 1942, but Dad always told us he was six months younger than her, because December comes after June—and he said this with such conviction that we kids believed him most of the time.

This is the thing about eulogizing my Dad. I should be able to reconstruct the chronology, and get the dates and details right. But Dad never let any pesky facts get in the way of a good story. So some of the stories I think I know might not be 100%

accurate. I know I could do the research and pin down the gospel truth. But to be perfectly honest, I like Dad's stories the way they are: tall tales, that *ought* to be true, even if some of the details are fuzzy. Isn't every great Dad kind of a mythological figure to his children?

When Dad talked about his childhood in Westport, it sometimes sounded like the 1950s and it sometimes sounded like the 1850s. The stories Dad told described a kind of Tom Sawyer / Huck Finn childhood: roaming wild in the woods for days (these woods right here), catching everything that moved, climbing everything that didn't. He told us about epic wars, fought with slingshot and BB-gun, between all the Protestant kids in town and all the Catholic kids. All the people in Dad's Westport stories had colorful nicknames: Speed, Fetch, Puke-face. Dad's nickname, apparently, was Spider. He said that people called him "Spider" because he was such a fast runner. As a kid I accepted that explanation, because I believed everything Dad told me, but it doesn't make a lot of sense to me now. There are a lot of animals that run faster than a spider. But there you go again: myths and legends.

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Speaking of mythological figures: Dad's parents: Robert MacDougall, known as Mac, and Helen MacDougall, born Helen Porter, were both schoolteachers. They met on their first day of teaching, the only two teachers at a tiny school on Manitoulin Island, aged all of nineteen and eighteen years old. They had a few good years together; they were married in 1937. But Mac volunteered for service when World War II broke out, and he was killed in action in Italy in 1944, leading a gallant, doomed charge against a Nazi machine gun nest—a detail guaranteed to capture the imagination of his grandsons.

My Dad was just a toddler when Mac died, so Dad and his sister Diane grew up without a father. I've often wondered how a boy with no father grew up so happy, so secure, so comfortable in his own skin—and also how he grew up to be such a guy's guy—a jock, a football player, a great outdoorsman. While at the same time he avoided so many of the traps and pathologies that snare so many men in our society, especially older men: problems with anger, or alcohol, or attitudes about women.

A big part of it, I imagine, was that Dad spent his whole life surrounded by women who adored him and would do just about anything for him. There was his Mom, Helen, my Granny: sometimes stern or strict, maybe, but she absolutely doted on Dad. She was also a great outdoorswoman and an athlete in her own right, so I guess those parts of Dad's life came straight from her. There was also Dad's Granny, Nell Stinson Porter, who was ostensibly helping her widowed daughter raise her two kids, but most of the time was really Dad's fun-loving partner in crime, spoiling him rotten and covering for him whenever he broke Helen's rules. And there was Dad's big sister Diane, who might

sometimes have resented the way the whole world seemed to revolve around her little brother—but the truth is she doted on him too.

And then, later on, there was my Mom, who met Dad on her first day at Queen's University in 1960, falling for a scheme so hare-brained and politically incorrect—well, if you don't know the story, I'll let her tell it. I'll just say we kids came by our gullibility honestly, and we didn't get it from Dad.

As I understand it, my Mom had smarter boyfriends at Queen's than Dad, more serious boyfriends, boyfriends more likely to become big shots. But she always says she married Dad because he made her happy. And possibly because he could run straight up the moat of Murney Tower? Like I say, the details in all these stories are fuzzy:

Did Dad really skip three grades in high school and still get picked to play football in university? Did he really see the Beatles perform live, before they were big, when he was in the Air Force in Germany? Do they really play *Singing in the Rain* on TV each year before Christmas? Myths and legends, legends and myths.

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My big sister Beth was born in Madison while Dad was finishing his doctorate; I was born right after our family moved to Dundas, when Dad became a professor at McMaster University in Hamilton; Amy and Jamie soon followed. I know Dad was working hard in those days, and with four kids Mom was working hard at home so that Dad could work hard at work. But as hard as he was working, I don't remember him ever being absent or anxious or short-tempered. He was always present, he was always himself, reliable and cheerful, keeping his cool and making us laugh. The term "Dad joke" was invented for our Dad—he always said, "I've got a million of 'em!"—even though the jokes themselves long predated him. I grew up thinking university professors were easy-going guys who loved corny jokes, beer, and fishing. I was so dismayed when I got to graduate school and everybody there was a neurotic nerd like me.

Mark Twain once said something about his own father that has long resonated with me. Twain said, or is supposed to have said: "When I was twenty-one, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have him around. But by the time I turned thirty, I was astonished at how much wisdom the old man had gained in just a few short years." So it was with me and Dad. I went off to university an Alex P. Keaton conservative, with the same short hair-cut the Air Force had given my Dad in 1963. I came back with a ponytail, an attitude, and a long list of things my Dad was wrong about. I cringe when I think of all the arguments I wanted to start with him in those days. Dad certainly rolled his eyes at me, and he never took me as seriously as I felt I deserved to be taken, but he never took the bait, he never took it personally, and if he ever got annoyed, he didn't show it. And after I grew out of that early-90s stridency—like Mark Twain, I was astonished at how

much Dad grew up in just a few short years—he never brought any of that up. “No hard feelings,” once again.

There have been times in my life, I have to confess, where I didn’t feel worthy of being Dad’s son. I used to wonder why I couldn’t throw a football like he could, or why I wasn’t the life of the party like he was, or why I didn’t wake up happy nearly every day of my life, like he somehow seemed to do. But all those doubts and insecurities were on me. Not a whiff of that ever came from him.

And I don’t want to focus on what Dad didn’t, or couldn’t, teach me. Here are a few things he did teach me. Dad taught me:

How to tell a joke, how to tell a story, and how to tell poison ivy.

How to climb the Treacherous North Face of Bluff Point, and not to worry that it’s really more like the east face. And never to take the big rocks at the cottage for granite. (Get it?)

He taught me how to drive, and how to grill a steak, and how to tie a tie.

He taught me how to shoot a porcupine, and how to paralyze a walleye or a pickerel by grabbing its lower lip. He taught me how to clean and gut a fish too, but I think I’ve forgotten.

He taught me the words to “Old Shep,” the trick to playing a saw, and the choreography to “Teen Angel”—though I could never cut a rug like him or Aunt Di.

He took me to see all the Star Wars movies and the James Bond movies and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. He taught me that *The Heroes of Telemark* was the first action movie to feature telemark skiing, which combines elements of cross-country and downhill skiing. I don’t know why I needed to know that, but I’ve never forgotten.

He taught me how lactic acid builds up in your muscles and the difference between fast-twitch and slow-twitch muscle fibers.

He taught me how to lift weights, though knowing *how* to lift weights doesn’t do you much good if you never do it.

He taught me that running is good for your soul and bad for your knees.

He taught me to love Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson, Molson Export, Wolfe Lake, and sunlight through the trees.

He taught me to love life, to laugh at myself, and to look on the bright side.

He taught me, I hope, to be a good husband, a good father, and a good man.

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As many of you know, my wife Lisa passed away this June, dying just a few days before Dad. Dad and Lisa were both diagnosed with cancer around the same time, three years ago this summer.

A slow death from cancer is a cruel blessing. It is a blessing because you see what's coming, and you have time to say your goodbyes. And that is a huge comfort to the ones you leave behind. But it's cruel, because it takes things away from you bit by bit—even the things that you or your loved ones think make you “you.” One day, Dad went fishing for the last time. One day, Dad went for his very last run. One day, Dad sat on the gazebo at our cottage in the late afternoon sunshine and enjoyed his last Wolfe Lake happy hour.

It was hard to see Dad's life taken from him in this way: to see the varsity athlete's body betray him; to see the great outdoorsman confined to his bed; to see the eternal optimist downcast and depressed. And to see our Mom working so hard to hold back the inevitable. Dad didn't want help from anyone but Mom at the end, and she didn't want to be anywhere but at his side. And the waters rose, and Dad's world contracted, until it was just him and Mom and us four kids sitting around his bed. We said our goodbyes and our “I love you”s, and he sipped his last sip of beer and told his last joke. And then we left Mom and Dad together, and then even she had to let him go. And he died at happy hour, and the sun came out from behind the clouds.

Dad didn't want all of us to fuss over him—“no hard feelings,” even then—and I'm sure he'd be embarrassed by all this attention and emotion today. I'm sorry, Dad. Sometimes we do have to feel hard feelings. But I think those will fade quickly and we'll just be left with memories of a great, great man who got to live a great, great life.

Memories, and a few questions: Did the Incredible Hulk really phone our house that one time? (Dad insisted he had.) Could he actually make the sun come out just by taking a nap? (He said that he could.) And: was my Dad truly that strong, that dependable, that happy, that good, for all those years?

He was. He really, truly was.

## **Beth MacDougall:**

For those of you I haven't met yet, I'm Beth, Duncan and Betty Jo's oldest daughter. If Dad could see us here today, he'd be rolling his eyes about "all this fuss" on a perfectly good fishing day. He DEFINITELY wouldn't want me to be making a speech. So for the record, this is not a speech! Just a few words.

Even though Dad would never admit it, I know that he'd be secretly pleased that each of you took time to join us today. It's evidence of all the many lives that he touched, how many people loved him, and looked up to him, and miss him so badly. His fellow Westport natives, his friends from Queen's and grad school, the students he taught and mentored during his long career at McMaster, the dear friends he met along the way, as well as us, his family. I know that many of you have traveled from out of town, even from outside Canada—and on behalf of the family, thank you for coming today to join in the celebration of my dad's life. We also want to thank Rebecca Whitman and the Rideau Valley Conservation Area, for the use of this beautiful place that Dad loved so much, as well as the Cowans and The Cove for their help with logistics today.

I wasn't very old when I started to realize that not everyone's dad was as cool, or as strong, or as funny, or as happy, or as much fun to be around, as mine. If you didn't know him in the 70s, come to the Cove for the slideshow: Dad could rock facial hair and Elvis-style sideburns and bell-bottom pants like nobody else.

Every year for my birthday, he would sneak my whole friend group of little kids into the McMaster gym and let us bounce around on the trampolines, spin on the rings, ricochet off the springboard into the pommel horse, and breathe helium straight from the tanks. I can just imagine Western's reaction if I asked permission to pull a crazy stunt like that today... But for Dad, anything and everything was possible. And *I* had a birthday during the school year. For Rob's birthday, he'd tie all us kids to a rope, hike us up to the top of Bluff Point, and take us mountain climbing and rappelling! What we were doing wasn't "climbing" so much as "being suspended"—Amy used to say, "Just squeal and scabble and Daddy will pull you up!" And that's pretty much how it went down, not just on Bluff Point but for life in general. Rob, Amy, Jamie and I all had total faith that nothing bad could ever happen to us while Dad was there. He was our superhero. I'm not sure Mom had quite the same level of confidence that Dad wouldn't lose or drop one of us. But he always brought us back safe, more or less unscathed, and always with great stories to tell.

Every superhero needs an origin story, and as Rob has mentioned, Dad's father, our grandfather Robert MacDougall, was killed in action in Italy when Dad was a toddler. So our father grew up without a father of his own (although I should note that Dad's mother, Helen MacDougall, my indomitable Granny, probably counted as three or four regular mortals). Anyway, it's always been amazing to me how Dad turned out to be such a natural at parenthood, despite never getting to know and grow up with his own dad.

And how he was part of such a legendary long and happy marriage with Mom, despite never really getting to see his parents function together as a couple. I mean, Rob, Amy, Jamie and I all lucked into super happy marriages, and all four of us are pretty solid parents, but we did that by standing on the shoulders of giants. By which I mean Mom and Dad.

There was no one like Dad, not ever. If he was a superhero, his secret ability was perfect clarity as to who he was, the people and the places he loved, and what mattered to him: family, friends, working out, making friends with wild animals, telling jokes, telling the same jokes again, and again, and sitting in the sun with Mom drinking a beer. I've never met anyone as comfortable in his own skin as Dad was, or as happy go lucky, or as completely unpretentious. Those qualities are way too rare in general—and they're almost unheard of among full professors! But Dad always knew exactly what mattered to him and he just refused to take any of the other stuff seriously.

Most of you know that this summer has already been harder on my family than it was ever supposed to be. The week before we lost Dad, Rob's wife Lisa passed away, way too young. At Lisa's funeral, the rabbi said something that stuck with me, something along the lines of, "So you were given a beautiful, wonderful gift, but it wasn't really a 'gift' gift, it was more of a loan, and you always knew the day would come that you had to give it back. You can choose to be ungrateful and bitter about losing what you had, or you can choose to be grateful that you had it for awhile."

I'm pretty sure the take-home message was that the second choice is better, but right now, I feel like the best we can manage is to do both. We're human, so, yeah, we mourn the loss, and we hate the fact that we can love someone so much and still lose them. But at the same time, we can still be grateful to have shared our lives with an amazing person who made our lives better, who made us better people. Whether he was our father, our husband, our grandpa, our cousin, our uncle, or our friend.

All of us who loved Dad are devastated to have lost him, and the world seems so much duller and grayer and colder without him in it. But wow, were we ever lucky to have had him in our lives. Love you, Dad.

### **Betty Jo MacDougall:**

Thank you again, everyone, for being with us today to remember Duncan. It seems right that we should be meeting here, since Duncan pretty well grew up on Foley Mountain, long before it was a conservation area: climbing up the original, almost vertical trail from the village up to Spy Rock, following animal tracks through the deep dark woods he loved, and, as Rob said, surviving what he assured me were cheerful and entirely friendly BB gun wars between his Catholic and Protestant buddies. He loved this place—and in fact served as chair of the Friends of Foley Mountain for several years after we retired to Westport. It always felt like home to him—so it's the perfect place for his bench and one we'll always be happy to visit to be with him.

We waited a few weeks for this memorial in hopes that the tears would have dried and we'd be left with only the happy memories. We may have miscalculated a little on that, since I'm still doing a whole lot of weeping. I apologize in advance if I do any of that today, because if anybody deserves to be remembered with joy, it's Duncan.

I think he was happy virtually every day of his life and it would break my heart to think that anyone might remember him only as he was in the past three years, as cancer slowly devoured him.

What I personally plan to remember is the super good-looking football player, all blond and tanned and muscular, who smuggled a totally illegal desk into the registration line on my very first day at Queen's, and filled up his little black book with the names and telephone numbers of every wide-eyed new freshette on campus—and then graded us all for his records. All I got was a B+. But I also got the good-looking football player. And when I did that, I won the lottery, because it turned out that he was not only good-looking but also funny and kind, and not only brilliant but also wise, a good man and a happy man.

He woke up smiling every morning of his life and he went through his days whistling. His mother often told me what a happy little boy he was, although he contributed to her grey hairs by climbing to the top of his grandfather's windmill when he was two, and setting out to explore the world on his tricycle when he was four (he made it almost to Newboro before a neighbour retrieved him), and hiking from Westport through the woods to Wolfe Lake, and paddling his little flat-bottomed rowboat across to the far shore to camp for days at a time when he was maybe ten. And he is still the only person I've ever met who was totally happy being a teenager. I think growing up in the magical Brigadoon-like village of Westport was a factor in that; he loved playing hockey on the lake in the winter, watching all the old classic westerns and thrillers at the sit-on-the-grass drive-in, dancing at Scott's ballroom every Friday and Saturday night, and fishing with his buddies—sometimes even legally.

He was eighteen that day I met him, and perfectly gorgeous—the kind of specimen my friend Pat describes as “bronzable.” And because I am profoundly superficial, I naturally fell for him immediately. How could I not love him, when he courted me with such irresistible feats as leapfrogging over every parking meter we met as we walked home from the movies, or climbing down into the moat around Murney Tower and then sprinting back up the nearly-vertical twenty-foot limestone walls, or entertaining me with an endless stream of elderly British vaudeville routines:

I say, my wife’s gone to the West Indies.  
Jamaica?  
No, she went of her own accord!

or:

I say, what’s that on your shoulder?  
That? That’s a Greek urn.  
A Greek urn? What’s a Greek urn?  
Oh, I don’t know – maybe twenty bob a week?

Best of all were all the useful things he taught me. For instance, one day he told me his Anatomy class had been discussing supernumerary mammaries. I was putty in his hands the minute he started using multisyllabic words, but ... extra breasts? I protested that that seemed impossible, but he insisted it was quite true, and that in fact he knew a girl in Westport with a breast in the middle of her back. “How dreadful for her!” I said, thinking about how uncomfortable her bra strap must be. “No, no,” he assured me, “she didn’t mind. In fact, she was very popular—all the guys loved to dance with her.” Anyway, whoever she was, I’m still keeping an eye out for her around Westport.

For a long time, I assumed this wasn’t really a serious long-term relationship—because being with him was just so easy and so much fun. It took me five years to realize what he instinctively knew: “just” being happy is not a small thing, it’s the only thing.

I think he was such a happy person because he spent every day of his life doing exactly what he loved and chose to do. If that sounds selfish, it never was. Because what he chose to do was simply to take delight in everything the world had to offer, and in everything he did.

And it sometimes seemed as if he could do anything:

He could climb up a tree and into an eagle’s nest to band the nestlings;

He could do somersaults on the flying trapeze, and skate or run rings around anybody else I ever knew;

He could, and did, win a Canada-wide competition for his somewhat unlikely knowledge of the Bible;

He could sit up all night shooting porcupines in the act of eating our cottage and then canoe across the lake the next morning to run a marathon in the pouring rain, carrying a tape recorder the size of a boom-box wrapped in water-logged foam in his backpack;

He could portage a canoe through the woods with a 24 of beer under his arm because I wanted fish for dinner;

He could write a massive textbook, typing with a single finger, or do flips off a diving board with his cousin on his shoulders, or hang-glide off a cliff;

He could whip up the world's best smoked trout for happy hour;

He could reduce the whole family to tears in our cottage Gong Shows with his heart-rending Elvis-impersonator renditions of "Old Shep" or "Teen Angel" (what our kids called Dad's Dead Dog and Dead Teenager songs);

Or he could shake it up to 1950s rock'n'roll like there was no tomorrow;

And he made me laugh and made me feel loved every single day of the nearly sixty years we had together.

It doesn't seem right, it will never seem right, that he is no longer with us. But he has left us so many legacies to remember him by. As an academic, he was Canada's second-earliest PhD in exercise physiology and a tenured full professor by his early 30s, internationally recognized as a pioneering researcher in applied muscular and neuromuscular physiology; and many of his students have written to me in the past few weeks, to tell me how he changed their career paths and their lives because they wanted to be the kind of professor and the kind of human being that he was.

He left a legacy too through his lifelong commitment to conservation and the environment. Wolfe Lake was always the centre of his universe, especially the 500 acres of wilderness that we bought back in the 1970s when we couldn't begin to afford it because it had been so dear to his heart since childhood. He always dreamed of protecting that land, keeping it as unspoiled and beautiful as it has been since forever, and we're just about there. After several decades of legal wrangling, the official papers are now finally being prepared to ensure that it will remain undeveloped green space, wild and beautiful, for the next 999 years, or eternity, whichever comes first. I wish it could have all been finalized while he was still with us, but at least he knew it was coming, and that was an enormous source of peace and satisfaction for him, something he considered his legacy to Wolfe Lake and to the world. His ashes and mine will eventually be scattered together on

the lake, just offshore from the spot where we've always gathered for happy hour—so we'll be there whenever anyone we love drops by.

And as his final legacy, I keep thinking of the song “We Rise Again in the Faces of Our Children.” Beth has inherited Duncan’s perpetually sunny disposition and his fondness for puns; Rob has his rock-solid integrity and innate wisdom; Amy is our dancing queen, with all her father’s dance moves and the same effortless ability to master any sport or physical challenge overnight; and Jamie has Duncan’s boundless patience and delight in introducing his children to the natural world. Plus, I’ve always felt that our whole family’s secret weapon, our superpower, is that we are really, really good at loving. Duncan’s children are not only brilliant and funny and kind, they have that superpower in spades. Every time I look at them, I see him.

So, yes, I’ve lost Duncan, but we had six decades of simply being happy together. If grief is the price I have to pay for all that love and laughter, it’s still been a terrific deal, and I’m still the luckiest person on the face of the planet. And there are three things I’ve learned in the course of our long-but-never-long-enough journey together: first, Love is what life is all about; secondly, to quote our beloved Lisa, Rob’s wife, whom we lost just six days before Duncan: Anything can happen, so you have to hold on to your cuties; and finally, the lesson Duncan himself demonstrated every single day of his life: Happiness is a choice. Simply choose to be happy, and you’ll make the world a brighter place. He did.

Thank you.