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Ross Charles Stuart

sat on the parish council, was a past chairman and also chaired and sat on all other committees within the church.

His absence at the afternoon Holy Communion service December 24 puzzled his daughter, Sharon, and son-in-law Ken Clark. He had planned to spend Christmas Eve with them in their new home at Lake Dore.

It was immediately following the service that his lifeless body was discovered in his residence. The cause of death was attributed to a cerebral hemorrhage.

Those who knew Ross also knew that his specialty was in fundraising. You hardly met the man and he didn't have a book of tickets in his shirt pocket. And to those who

were sometimes hesitant to part with their money, Ross would say, *C'mon now fella. It's for a good cause.*

There was no individual prouder in 1991 than Ross Charles Stuart. He was proud of his community; he was proud of the successful completion of Centennial Park, he was proud of the history book and, of course, very proud of the week-long celebrations. He beamed with pride that Wednesday back in May when Eganville swelled with thousands of people who came to watch the famous *Snowbirds* and he felt even prouder when he saw thousands of sons and daughters and others return to the old hometown to celebrate our birthday.

As a member of the Centennial Committee for the past four years, Ross' major contributions were in fundraising although he shared his opinions and thoughts on other matters quite freely.

Ross was a straight shooter when it came to expressing his thoughts. If he had an opinion, he shared it at a meeting and not after it was over. Sometimes he was harsh in his criticism but no matter the outcome of a discussion or the result of a vote, Ross always

supported what the majority wanted to do.

When the idea of holding the first draw for a new car was raised, the proposed cost of the tickets (\$100 each) didn't send shock waves through Ross like it did others. In fact, four major draws were held raising approximately \$60,000 for the fund and Ross, alone, probably accounted for ticket sales of about \$20,000.

He was also a vital member of the group responsible for the *Friends of Eganville* monument and this granite structure, in the shape of a bench, which sits in the park along the Bonnechere River, is there today because of the spirited dedication of Ross Stuart and others like him.

Ross was many things to many people. Just a few weeks ago, he joined other Rotarians and walked in the Eganville Santa Claus Parade, collecting food along the route for the needy families of the area. Prior to Christmas, he escorted his aged and blind uncle, Willard Lett, to the Christmas dinner which the Legion hosts annually for the elderly and disabled.

But as active and involved as he was, Ross was also a very lonely man at times. His wife, Mabel, was diagnosed as having alzheimers 10 years ago and thus, their plans for retirement only remained a dream for Ross. Mabel remained at home for the first few years of her illness, receiving excellent care from her family who were assisted by a homecare worker. In 1983, Ross took an early retirement from his job, but a year later he had to make the difficult decision to admit Mabel to Groves Park Lodge in Renfrew.

For the past seven years, he faithfully made several trips a week to the Lodge to visit Mabel. Up until the death of Bill Lawson, which occurred just prior to Christmas 1990, Ross would often take Bill along with him as his

wife, Eleanor, is also a resident of the Lodge.

This is only part of the very worthwhile life of Ross Stuart. There is much from his life that remains untold -- from growing up on the farm just on the east fringe of Eganville, to enlisting for his country and heading off to Camp Ipperwash for training, then returning to the family farm which he took over from his father and eventually selling in 1957 and securing a full-time position with the Brewer's Retail in Eganville.

There is the period in their lives, during the early 1960s when Ross and Mabel operated the *Milky Way Dairy Bar and Coffee Shop* on the western outskirts of the village, directly across from the Brewer's Retail. *The best milkshakes in town* is how I, as youngster of seven, remember their establishment.

There were also Ross' untiring efforts to establish a local tourism association in the 1960s, to encompass the lodge and resort owners of the greater Eganville area. Several organizational meetings were held in their home before an official group was born.

The one thing in life that did disappoint Ross was people's refusal to volunteer their time for the betterment of their community and to support worthwhile community activities. Unless people had a very good reason for not helping out, Ross could not understand why they would not.

While Ross' presence at the wind-up New Year's Eve party at the Legion (the last official function of the village's Centennial) was missed last week, it will be the weeks, months and years ahead that this community will really feel the loss of such a devoted citizen.

As one long time friend commented just prior to his funeral, *His hands were always there to help others no matter what!*