

# Burlington Airpark owner's zest for life remembered

By IRENE GENTLE  
The Champion

On Saturday, Milton's Victor Kovachik received an emotional send-off that mimicked the way he had lived — hard, fast and fervent.

He died July 19 from the complications of a stroke at Mississauga General Hospital.

His family paid their respects with a public memorial at his beloved Bell School Line business, the Burlington Airpark.

The memorial included several low-ranging fly-bys, a tribute by rocker and pilot Tom Cochrane and the release of more than a dozen dove-white balloons up to the heavens.

"He'd have loved this. He'd be thrilled we're doing it up in such a way," said his daughter Patti McTavish. "He was a private man but it was anything for flying."

Prior to his death at age 76, Mr. Kovachik carved out a life bursting with love, starting with his wife Gwendolyn.

The pair met in Milton and shared 53 years of marriage along with eight children, 14 grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and flying.

Born in the former Czechoslovakia, Mr. Kovachik immigrated to Canada at age 3.

As an adult, he happily toiled as an airplane mechanic at Lester B. Pearson airport before deciding to go on his own with the Burlington Airpark.

He and Gwendolyn shared in that enterprise, and today their children have a hand in it as well.



Victor Kovachik

For Mr. Kovachik, the high-flying business was a dream come true.

"Aviation, aside from his family, was his whole life," said Ms McTavish. "That was his dream, to start the business and watch it grow."

Shortly before his death, Mr. Kovachik was still plugging away at it, purchasing more land to expand the runways.

"He would not retire, he pushed on ahead," said Ms McTavish.

"He had a great life. He did everything he wanted to do. He lived the way he wanted to live."

And he had a knack of propelling those who loved him to reach for the sky.

"Just go out and live your dream. Don't deny yourself," said Ms McTavish. "Just go out and do what you want to do. If you're in the wrong career, change it. Do what your heart tells you to."

A private memorial for family also took place.

But the public memorial was a splashier affair, designed to capture the tender but adventuresome spirit of the man who inspired it.

It featured Mr. Cochrane, who has an airplane at the airpark, singing the old Dan Fogelberg song Leader of the Band.

"My dad didn't understand the rock and roll scene and used to tease Tom," recalled Ms McTavish. "He'd call him an 'artist.' He didn't understand it and didn't want to."

Former deputy Minister of housing Milt Farrow also made a speech at the event, along with several family members.

"He had no fear when it came to business and taking risks. He had an enthusiasm," said Ms McTavish of her father. "We're very sad to lose him."



Photo by IAN ROSS

Carolyn Kovachik-MacNeil remembers her father, Victor Kovachik, who was the founder of the Burlington Airpark.

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