

PETE

“Hi, I’m Peter Fleck and you must be John.” I had just put my purchases from the liquor store in the car trunk and turned to get into my car when a good looking, smiling face on a head topped with wavy black hair approached me with his hand extended.

After exchanging a few words he advised that he had met Valerie the other day at Hicks’ Store. The he invited us to a BBQ he was having the following weekend and I assured him we would be there if at all possible.

This was September 1993. Valerie and I had purchased a home in Milford. I had retired that year but Valerie was going to commute to Toronto on Mondays and return to the County on Friday evenings until her retirement in April 1994.

Thus began a relationship with Pete and Nancy that lasted until that horrible day a couple of weeks ago that took Pete from us.

Right from the beginning of our life in the County, Peter and Nancy became fast friends even though there is a significant age difference between us and them.

We had assumed that we would spend several of the winter months in Florida each year but after two years when we stayed for 3 months each winter at Titusville we decided that it was becoming a little unclear as to where we were really putting down our roots. During these years we had visits from our new neighbours in the County including Pete and Nancy. On their visit we joined with my cousin Orville and his wife Nancy who lived in Florida – those of you who live in Milford will remember Orville’s very large motor home in our driveway. We all went on an unforgettable day cruise in a newly established gambling boat. The boat put out to sea, sailed to the three mile limit then opened the casino and wallowed around for hours.

The owners of the vessel offered free sea sickness pills to all passengers when they boarded – they knew something we didn’t. The ladies, Valerie and the two Nancy’s declined the offer. Orville Pete and I did, and we became quite ill while the ladies tried all of the gambling facilities. I seem to remember Orville hanging over the rail and Pete lying on the deck and I wasn’t much better.

When we stayed home for the subsequent winters we entertained son Allan, his wife Melanie and their new grand-

daughter Anjelica for Christmas. A second granddaughter joined in a couple of years and we established the practice of visiting Jackson’s Falls on Christmas afternoon to visit Pete and Nancy and Nancy’s mother Connie and her sister in law. The girls would be all dressed up and loved going there to see the big Christmas tree and of course get more presents as well as being made a great fuss of. Pete, as you know, always played Santa Claus at the Hospital on Christmas morning so he would arrive at our house at 6.00 am. wake everyone up – well maybe not Valerie and me – to surprise the grandkids and their parents. The granddaughters looked forward to Santa’s visit and set out gifts and treats for him although Allan and Melanie did say that Santa could have come a little later!! Pete made it a great start to Christmas Day.

The girls are now 14 and 12 years old but they remember Christmas in Milford and the visits to Jackson’s Falls, Santa’s visits and Christmas Eve at St. Philip’s.

As we go through life we meet numerous people. Some become acquaintances and few, usually a very small number become true friends. Over the years I have discussed this fact with many people. When asked to identify true friends most can only name 2 – 4 who they would class as true friends. Pete was a true friend. When I was ill and was in Kingston General Hospital Pete and Nancy were most generous with their time, looking after Buffy, feeding Valerie and driving her to and from Kingston in the winter no less.

Pete knew our cocktail hour from 6 – 7 p.m. and would often drop by for a scotch or two and discussions of numerous topics. Did you always agree? I hear you ask. Of course not but we respected everyone’s right to make up their own mind about anything. We will miss him.

Neither Valerie or I have really taken in the fact that Peter won’t be by for a drink and chat anymore which is so sad and a great loss for us. Thankfully Nancy is also our true friend which lessens the feeling of a void in our lives.

- John A Jackson