

Robert Rene Gauchie

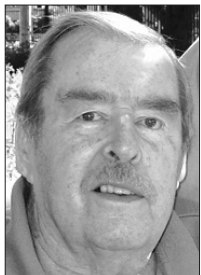
December 12, 1927 ~ August 31, 2013

It is with great sadness that the family announces the passing of Bob on August 31, 2013. Bob was born in Edmonton and grew up in Barrhead, Alberta, the youngest of 4 children of Rene Gauchie and Muriel (nee Winter).

Bob was predeceased by his loving and caring wife Fran of 62 year in 2009. Dearly loved father of daughters Lynda, Patricia (John Farquharson) and Michelle Wakeman (Sam Smith). Bob leaves behind his grandsons Jason, Andrew (Rose), Nathan and Adam, granddaughter Diane (Roger), 6 great-grandchildren and 5 great-great-grandchildren, many nieces and nephews, his loving sister Marjorie Down, special sister-in law Pauline Collins and dear friend Chris Tabor.

At the age of 17 (1944) Bob joined the Canadian Armed Forces and in the ensuing years enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force. In 1961 Bob retired from the RCAF and became a full-time civilian pilot and engineer. He spent many years working as a bush pilot in the North. He truly loved flying in the North and its great people.

This love nearly claimed his life; but he managed to survive 58 days alone inside his crashed bush plane through the deep freeze of an Arctic winter. Bob became known as, "The man who refused to die," and his record for solo Arctic survival still stands to this day. He was found on April 1, 1967, by Ron Sheardown and Glen Stevens, 54 pounds lighter, scarred by frostbite and smelling worse than a hog. Sheardown recalls, "He stood there with that blue suitcase, like a man waiting for a bus." In the moment of rescue, with the same determination that had so long sustained him, he drew himself tall



and began limping toward the turboprop – a haggard creature with shaggy hair, one foot wrapped in dirty canvas, and a bearded, emaciated face lighted by a shining grin. "Hello," Gauchie said. "Do you have room for a passenger?"

In 1968 he founded now-famous Buffalo Airways and later in 1970 sold the business to his friend and partner Joe McBryan. Bob needed a change and the family relocated to the Okanagan for 30 years. He was active for many years with the Penticton Air Cadet Squadron. In 2002 Bob and Fran moved to Victoria to be closer to family.

Bob was an affable man, quiet by nature, peaceful, kind-hearted, well-spoken, and gifted with a wonderful sense of humor. Bob had an unstoppable inner strength; a combination of sheer true grit, determined mind and this stubborn resolve not to die. Bob was a handful at times, took many risks, but clearly lived life on his own terms. His refusal to give up, despite all odds, defined Bob's unique character. He was an inspiration to many.

In the past six years Bob became a friend to many at Mount St. Mary Hospital. Special thanks to his physician Dr. Salmaniw and to the nurses and staff for their excellent care. We are forever grateful that Bob was loved and cared for with such enduring kindness and respect.

No service by request. A Celebration of Bob's Life will be held on April 1, 2014, in Victoria. More details to follow.

