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# Robert Wayne Buhr

## a eulogy by Rodney Buhr

Robert was the first son of Edward and Eva Buhr and was the first sibling of his sister Sharon. Eventually he became the oldest brother of ten more siblings: Bonita, Patricia, Charles, Rodney, Julie, Laurie, James, Raymond, Stuart and Nicole.

He attended school in Altona, where he loved to learn about science and technology. He liked to throw out interesting little factoids at his siblings during meal times. Things about atoms and energy and rockets and planets. One day Robert had Bonnie and Pat and Charles and I sit down on the living room couch while he stood in front of us with a big cardboard poster propped up on a chair and practised his school science fair presentation. My memory tells me that we all sat quietly spellbound as he taught us about the mechanical operations of a canal lock system. At least, I know I was impressed. I actually forget what my sisters made of it.

Charles and I spent hours with him in his bedroom reading his car and hunting magazines. I was also intrigued with the science fiction pulp magazines he had. I was especially captivated by the cover art on the books and anthologies of short stories. I read science fiction books for decades after, often at the rate of one every week, until I eventually realized very few of the stories were worth the effort. I've browsed through some of his current science fiction books, but that magic never came back for me. I don't think Robert ever lost his love of that genre.

Robert often took Charles and I out hunting in the countryside outside Altona. Which was really just an excuse to shoot little helpless wildlife and defenseless trees and mud and abandoned barn windows. Robert was truly my hero when I was a young boy. I hoped I could be like him when I grew up.

Years later when I was in high school, in 1970 or so, a girl I knew asked me about my big family and I showed her a picture of Robert in a yearbook. Her response shocked me! She said, "He looks like kind of a nerd, I'm glad you don't look like him."

Now, this was a period in time when all the cool kids were trying to be hippies, so being a nerd was not cool. I was very surprised and defensive and a little hurt at her comment. Later when I looked at the picture objectively, I thought; dammit, she's right, he does look like a nerd! But I was still glad that she'd dumped me.

One of the first jobs I remember Robert having was as a cooks helper on a train travelling in western Canada. I think it was for a CN or CP work crew train. He told us the morning rush for breakfast was very hard to get used to, especially when the head cook had passed out the night before and couldn't be roused. Apparently Robert learned to crack eggs into a pan two at a time! One in each hand!

Another job was as a cook in Ocean Falls, a remote town on the BC coast that had a large pulp and paper mill and was full of restless young men always looking for entertainment. I remember him coming home during this time, bearded, with stories of the strange things that happened in his apartment building in Ocean Falls. I can really only recall one story now, and it shouldn't be shared here. It was only later that I realized, that Robert was also one of those restless young men.

There were almost no bearded men in Altona in 1965. I was probably twelve years old and his was the first beard I'd ever touched!

Another job he had was in the Ogilvie Mills lab in Medicine Hat where he baked countless loaves of bread to test the quality of flour. Later he moved back to Winnipeg where he met and married Laura Leblanc in 1968.

In 1974 I moved in with Robert and his friend Ron Dyck who were renting a two-storey house on Agnes Street in Winnipeg. Robert was taking an Electronics Technology course at Red River College and working part time at a furniture plant. Linda, my future wife, was living in the student residence at St Boniface nursing school where she was studying to become an RN. On many winter evenings Linda would come over to our house and cook a nice dinner for us all and we'd laugh and joke for hours despite the fact that she should have been studying. Robert and Ron were both competent cooks as well, and they kept me fed when Linda couldn't make it.

In 1975 Robert finished his course and moved to Regina and got a job with SaskTel. Laura's son Michael was born in 1979, and Laura and Robert and Michael lived together for several years .

In early 1986 Robert met and fell in love with a dazzling redhead, Maureen Behl. They were married on December 6, 1986. They have lived and worked in Regina all this time, enjoying many holidays together, cruising and travelling the world together. The rest of the family were constantly surprised at the number of trips they managed to get in every year.

Linda and I have been graciously hosted by Robert and Maureen many times over the thirty-three years since their marriage. When they came to Manitoba in the summer they'd often drop in to sit around our fire pit and talk and laugh as long as the mosquitos let us. It was during one of these evening sessions that Linda learned Robert was wearing long johns, even though it was a warm summer night and we were sitting near a roaring fire! From then on she'd always want to know if he was wearing long johns. It was one of the many things we loved to tease him about. Robert was usually the quietest one in this group, as he was in most group settings, but he always had quick laugh and a fast come-back.

We often asked Rob and Maureen to move to Manitoba so we could be closer, but they always asked why we didn't move to Regina to be closer. Of course, we all had good reasons for staying where we were, but I wish one of those scenarios had been possible. It would have been awesome to be able to see my big brother any time at a moments notice.

When Maureen was diagnosed with cancer, Robert stepped up to help her in any way he could. He was by her side through all the surgeries and endless treatments. I don't think I ever heard a word of complaint from him. It was typical of the way he treated life's difficulties and setbacks. He just quietly got to work to get things done.

In recent years Michael has moved in with Robert and Maureen and has been an invaluable help in their day-to-day lives. He also came to be a close friend to his dad. They both spoke fondly of times they spent together walking, snow-shoeing, biking and working around the yard. In the past few difficult months Linda and I have spent many enjoyable hours getting to know Mike. He's grown into a thoughtful, compassionate man making the best of a terrible situation. Linda and I want you to know, Michael, you are welcome in our home anytime.

As you all know the Buhr's are a big family. We have lost a brother in infancy we never got to know, little Daniel. When our father came home and told us that James's twin had died, we were all very saddened. And when Pat and Robert passed it has been very difficult to part with them. And so now there are 10 of us left. So many of us, and yet the circle seems so much smaller. It has certainly taught me to be mindful about appreciating the time we have together.

We're going to miss you Robert. You quiet man who smiled and laughed easily. You crazy man who drove your motorcycle way too fast. You loving man who took care of your family. You funny man who told the corniest jokes. You beautiful nerd.