

## Tribute to Merlyn Kinrade - Gary McHale's speech at Kinrade's funeral - Oct. 11, 2012

Merlyn was a unique and rare person who had principles that drove him throughout his life. A few will remember Merlyn as a troublemaker and some will see him simply as a fighter. However, to those close to Merlyn they will remember a man passionately devoted to his family, his friends, his community and to Canada.

While many of us may think we have principles, Merlyn was one of those rare examples of someone who lived what he believed. To Merlyn his principles were not something he had as a matter of convenience or lived up to when times were good, but principles that controlled everything he did. Merlyn was a people person and always ready to serve others whether friend or foe.

To Merlyn it was all about making a better world for his family, his friends and his community. For many of us we are so easily gripped by fears, by the need for money, by complacency towards our fellowman, or by our desire simply to relax and take it easy. To Merlyn there was always a need, always someone else who needed help, always some way to make life better for others.

This is seen in the number of people who have expressed condolences in the last few days. It is seen in the fact that in the past week a synagogue in Boston has been offering up prayers for Merlyn and his family and in the fact that it was just a few months ago that a Toronto based group had a tree planted in Merlyn's name in Israel. In January of this year a tribute to Merlyn was published in the National Post written by Christie Blatchford and you can find on the internet a dozen websites now posting tributes to Merlyn.

He was almost a force of nature and someone who throughout his whole life stood up for the little guy and always helped his neighbours. You never had to guess where Merlyn stood and you didn't have to be concerned that he was talking behind your back. It didn't matter whether Merlyn was out at dinner at a local restaurant or standing watching the Santa Claus parade or walking around at the Caledonia fair - if he saw someone who was failing in their duty to help others he would immediately confront the person.

Merlyn was completely loyal to his friends and he could not stand gossip. I remember one example when I was running in the Federal election back in 2008 a local businessman walked behind me at one of the debates and whispered, "Racist". While I wasn't that concerned - hey, fools come a dime a dozen - the businessman made the mistake and saying it while Merlyn was with me. Merlyn immediately confronted the man and demanded he either prove it or apologize. Merlyn tracked the guy down the next day and the next day and a week later. I had a booth at the Caledonia Fair and Merlyn had the guy come and apologize to me.

If you or I confronted people the way Merlyn did there would be loud shouting matches or a fist fight but not with Merlyn. I never saw a single person try to argue back with Merlyn and in most cases people hung their heads in shame as Merlyn reminded them of what was right and wrong. I often wondered how Merlyn got away with doing this and the answer appears to be that people knew Merlyn wasn't a hypocrite - he didn't correct you and then go away and do something else. He had lived his life with principles and he never saw himself as better than other people. In the end he was right - people did know right from wrong.

Anyone visiting Merlyn in the past few months didn't see a man who was angry or bitter because of his allotment in life, but someone who knew peace and that God was in control both in the good times and the bad times. While I believe Merlyn always believed God existed, it wasn't until the past few years that it became real to him and he put his faith in Jesus.

As a person driven by principles Merlyn had a hard time dealing with people who were so quick to forsake their own principles. Merlyn couldn't understand how people couldn't step forward for the sake of their own children to build something better. Merlyn could have easily ignored local issues, his family wasn't directly affected and he could have easily gone about his life without lifting a finger to help anyone, but that wasn't Merlyn.

Merlyn grew frustrated with so many people who claimed to be Christian, so many who believed in loving their neighbours, being the good Samaritan or carrying their cross daily.

He was angry when even local pastors, who after 6 years, were more willing just to preach about the love of God and overcoming your fears than demonstrating Christ to the community. Merlyn had sacrificed his time, his money and his health to serve others which is exactly what Christians are called to do and yet where were the pastors, the elders and other Christians who claimed to believe in the same things?

It has always been true as you look down through the ages that there are those who claim to be Christian but refuse to put into action what Christianity stands for. Anyone reading the Bible will see that this was one of Jesus' main messages about the reality of the Church - some are sheep and some are goats and as Jesus would say there are many wolves in sheep's clothing.

The Apostle Paul would say that anyone who wants to live a righteous life will be persecuted. Jesus would say, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

All of us here today are saddened by the fact that we know Merlyn is not returning to us but... I shall see him again and when I do I will not shake his hand as a friend but embrace him as a brother in Christ. Merlyn had been faithful to the end and had placed his trust in God and this was reflected in the peace that he had over the past year.

In closing I would like to state that 4 hours after Merlyn passed away my own father passed away in Kingston. We all need to remember there are never enough years, months or days to do the things we should do.

In our society my father was a decent man - he worked, paid his taxes, owned his own home and passed away at 85 years old. I cannot remember once my father taking a stand on anything other than to endlessly complain about the politicians. He never lifted a finger to try to make a difference, to make this world a better place.

In six years Merlyn was more of a father to me than my own father. Merlyn rebuked me when I needed correction, counselled me when I had problems, listened to me when I was whining, opened his home to me many times and opened his heart to me. He was always there - just a phone call away and he would drop everything if you needed help.

In many ways Merlyn was an example for us all. We can wake up each day and decide whether to serve ourselves or others, whether to be more concerned about our own needs or be concerned about what is best for our families and our community.

If Merlyn were here I know what he would say - He would say, "You know what is right, you know what is wrong so stop being a coward."