

A Tribute to Kerry

Good evening everyone.

We are gathered today to celebrate Kerry: his life, his humour, his adventures, his family, and the mark he has left on all of us. This is not about endings. It is about recognizing the richness of his life and the way he continues to inspire us, despite his physical absence.

Kerry was born in Vancouver, BC, as the eldest of three children. From a young age, he learned responsibility. At just ten years old, he was asked to help take care of his little sister and brother due to the absence of their father.

He recalled going with his dad to Vancouver Island on some work trips. His dad was a mechanical engineer, who eventually did civil engineering work in land development. Kerry was exposed to job sites and work meetings in his early years, while his dad sorted out his career.

Interestingly, Kerry would later do the same with his kids—beginning with Rocky, who now does the same with his kids too. Each of them taking turns, at times, to be with dad at the office.

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On winter weekends, Kerry and his siblings would sit on the stairs to the basement, whining. “I hate skiing. I don’t want to go, why do we have to go skiing?”, while their mother tied all six of their lace-up ski boots. She endured, because she knew that once her kids got all geared up and onto the ski hill, all three of them loved skiing. Mostly, they would ski together—a satisfying alternative to fighting at home.

Sometimes they would play together with neighbourhood friends. Their dad had built a two-story fort in the backyard, complete with open-air windows on the top floor—perfect for throwing brick “bombs” down on the “enemies” below. Although there was the odd thud in the noggin, one time, leaving a welt the size of an egg, it is amazing that no one was seriously hurt.

As they grew older, their father became more and more absent. Their mother had to do everything for her kids, and she had no time to make sure they didn’t run amuck.

By the time Kerry started high school, it was evident to his mother that her kids were not experiencing school the way most did. They were unhappy and hard to manage. This was, in part, because they had a Chinese last name with an ethnic appearance, while living in a predominantly caucasian neighbourhood. Also, in part, due to the lack of a father figure.

Fortunately, Kerry’s father did provide for the family financially. With her kids becoming young unruly teenagers, his mother, Lillian, demanded they move out of the city and build a house on

a seventy-two acre plot of land in the backwoods of Mission, BC. They lived in a trailer on the property for a year while the house was being built.

It was a fancy house, with room to explore, and animals of all kinds. Kerry even had a dog of his own—Jenny, a dark grey Newfoundland whom he trained and took to dog-sports events. Although Jenny chewed his favourite cowboy hat, and really did eat his pig skeleton homework project, he adored her, as well as the family cat and a pet snake that got lost in the house, never to be seen again.

Growing Up, Kerry was a popular guy; mostly he was having a good time, fooling around, pulling pranks, drinking underage, and driving too fast. He loved pushing solo sports to extremes—fast, furious, and always seeking air time.

He pushed boundaries, seeing how far he could go... or not. There were disasters, including totalled vehicles, but he always believed: if you don't try, you won't learn the limits.

School started okay in his early years, but not so much in high school. He had a bad experience at Chinese kindergarten as a half-Caucasian student. Despite this, he did well in his primary years, but lost interest later in high school. He fooled around, was disruptive, and said he liked summer best. In winter, he'd rather be skiing or snowmobiling than going to school.

Tall, dark, and handsome—he was referred to as, “Burt Reynolds” and “The Sex Symbol of Hatzic School.” Of course, the girls were smitten with him.

On the ski slopes, he had the nickname “La Dong.” He was fearless—executing back flips, Mobius, double flips, three-sixties. The same was true on the water—skiing at such extreme angles he could touch his back to the water, even barefoot skiing at high speed. Boundaries, for Kerry, were always there to be challenged, to be tested.

And sometimes his testing and experiments went wrong. Like the day he tried to save time by mixing all the pool chemicals in one bucket. The result? His mother's entire kitchen turned white—including the windows—and he burned off his eyebrows.

Becoming an Adult, Kerry was on the wild side. He had ample love interests, though the girls often swooned over his younger brother, much to his chagrin.

After much carousing, he almost married Shelley. But two weeks before the wedding, he pulled out. He didn't think he could stay with her for the rest of his life, and decided it was better to deal with it now rather than later. It was a hard thing to do, and the right thing to do, the latter being the most important to him over such serious matters.

He finally met Rhonda Hoscevar and they married in 1990 in a small ceremony, with immediate family in Arizona. Together, they had three boys—Rockland, Benton, and Kazlo. He became a better father than his own had been, staying present despite the demands of a growing business.

His interest in boats and racing started in his teens, inspired by his Uncle Eddy, who raced boats in Vancouver and the Nanaimo-Vancouver bathtub race, and had a boat business in Richmond. This obsession stuck with him for life. Kerry bought and sold boats, always seeking faster ones, and raced them in southern U.S.A., with various buddies in tow, creating lots of mischief in their wake.

To fund his racing passion in earlier years, he worked hard labour jobs. Logging nearly killed him when a snagged tree crushed his legs. His recovery gave him time to think and he chose not to pursue logging.

Even though he didn't like school, he was very smart and had a knack for thinking outside the box. On his BCIT application, he entered the year he "*would have*" graduated from high school. He had no trouble with the course material and became a surveyor, earning respect for not only surveying and reading blueprints but also jumping into the trenches with the crew to help out.

Early in his career, Kerry worked on a wide range of projects, like the Vancouver LRT tunnels, and the Ross Bay trunk sewer in Victoria, a trench job requiring shoring through a graveyard. And a number of river crossings, like the BC Telephone river crossings near Mt. Robson. As colleague Dennis Connolly described, "it was tough, risky, and had "disaster" written all over it. In fact, the Superintendent at the time took medical leave rather than face it. But not Kerry—he led with such energy and enthusiasm that the crew rallied around him, and together, pulled it off." Dennis added, "the teamwork and camaraderie on that job remain some of my best career memories." That project went on to win the 1988 Environmental Award of Excellence.

His nickname was "The Big Chinaman." He survived a near electrocution on the job, invented new techniques with the crews, and became known for ingenuity, hard work, and camaraderie. Visiting some of his old construction colleagues last fall revealed the respect they held for him. Old photo albums came out, and to Kerry's surprise, he was in most of the photos. Beginning back in those days, he would offer up solutions to construction difficulties encountered on the job, as well as pull pranks on crew buddies. And sometimes he too was the butt of the joke.

He built lifelong friendships and later brought some of those same people into his own company. Many stayed with him, even postponing retirement.

Eventually, Kerry focused on Crawford Quarry, one of his legacy properties managed today by his sons. He grew the quarry into the producer of beautiful blue granite that can be seen throughout Kelowna. He also revived his father's company, Arthon Construction, in the 1990s,

ensuring a steady demand for aggregates through construction contracts. Projects grew in number and scope as the company grew. His motto was simple: *“We get some tough jobs, and that’s no accident. We’re known for our ingenuity in the face of challenge.”*

He had the ability to see solutions and not problems. He saw challenges where others saw roadblocks, and tackled them with determination and a grin.

Keith Meldrum, retired VP Special Projects, spoke from his own experience, saying Kerry brought people together, lifted them up, and made even the toughest challenges feel possible. He attracted the kind of people who raised the bar and made us all better.

Kerry could see the potential and the strength in people and would set them up for success. He inspired people to do more, and to be more, than they knew they were capable of.

Eventually Kerry expanded the business thru Sandhill Materials in Kitimat; a massive aggregate operation, on a 267-hectare property. The operation is designed for large-scale production, holding an estimated 100 million+ tonnes of sand and gravel and 400 million tonnes of quarry rock. It has been described as the largest naturally occurring mound of well-graded sand and gravel in Canada. What a legacy to leave behind!

On the other hand, Kerry also managed to enjoy family and a personal life, probably because these aspects of life intermingled with business life.

Kerry was a good father to his three boys, with the support and hard work of his wife Rhonda. Together, they all shared high-speed adventures. Later, he became “Ya Ya”—grandfather to four grandchildren, Roman, Aurora, Maverick and Layla.

He loved to share his success through food, spirits and sports. Food was always central. In every town, he sought out the best restaurants—usually Chinese first, then anything else good. He could have written a best seller, *The Best Eats in BC*.

He visited his family’s village in China as a young man, and more recently he embraced his Chinese heritage, even in his appearance—until chemo forced him to lose his iconic beard.

He always liked to be in the driver’s seat. And, as most of you know, he was a little bit whacky. Another colleague said, he was a breath of fresh air in an industry, where he characterized it with corporate shenanigans.

After his cancer news, Kerry was still Kerry, “holding court” in Kelowna General Hospital. Saying: *“It’s okay. I’ll get you through this.”*

He had asked the doctors if this is where he needed to be until the end. They said, “yes.” So, of course, he decided to figure out a way to go on a tour, rather than spend his time in hospital. He and his sons sourced oxygen concentrators of various sizes, and oxygen tanks for times there was no power - about two dozen of them! He gathered family, with a plan to visit the places and people that held special meaning in his life. He called it, “The Chevy Chase, Last Vacation.” It was like he was high on oxygen! He had an amazing eight weeks, with Chemo in between, travelling to Vancouver Island, all the way up to Yukon and back home.

At home, in the Quarry, we held his, “Before my last breath” celebration, with 250 people acknowledging him for who he was, how he impacted them, and what he had accomplished. It was amazing! He faced illness with courage, humour, and the same daring spirit he faced everything else.

It seemed like it would never end! He even learned new things. He said, *“I’m sixty-four years old, and finally starting to listen to people.”...well, sometimes at least.*

It was decided we would do it all again next year if he was still with us. Although he reduced his cancerous tumour on his lung by about 70%, the idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis took him on Nov. 8th, 2025.

Kerry would often say: *“Too much traffic in my head.”* Maybe that highway will slow down now, ...or maybe not. On the other side, he’s got a lot of relatives—it might be just as busy.

Kerry is, and always will be, a legend. For his projects, his speed, his daring, his ingenuity. But more than that, for his humour, his generosity, his commitment to family and friends, and his perpetual refusal to quit. As one friend commented, Kerry actually packed about three life times into one.

His legacy is alive with us here today. It lives in the business he built with determination and vision. It lives in his sons and grandchildren who carry his spirit forward. And it lives in all of us, his family, friends and community, gathered as a demonstration of our love for a man who shaped lives, created opportunities, and inspired us to be braver and bolder than we thought possible.

It is us, all of us together, who will keep Kerry’s spirit alive. We have lost his physical presence but we will always have our our relationship with him.
