

Joseph Albert Ephiem Bruce. (1917-1997)

By Gabriel Dufault

Born on John Bruce Road in Saint Boniface Manitoba to Eugene Bruce and Clarina Hogue, the 3rd of 18 children. Joseph was the great-grandson of John Bruce who was the first president of the Provincial Government prior to Manitoba entering confederation in 1870.

In 1934, at age 17, Joseph officially became a member of L'Union National Metisse Saint Joseph du Manitoba. In his early 40's, he began his life-long service in L'Union National. He served in many capacities and was proud to be its President for over 25 years.

The year of the Louis Riel centennial celebration in 1985, he was L'Union's President and as Vice-president of the Louis Riel centennial Committee overseeing the many functions. Throughout the years, he also served as chairperson of the board of chalet Louis Riel a senior citizen home in St. Vital, as board member with the Saint Boniface Historical Society. He was also a member of the Manitoba Metis Federation.

To help support his family, he had to quit his formal education at age 14 in grade 9. A few years later in 1935 at age 18, he bought a truck and started "Bruce Bros." In June 1941, he married Eugenie Pelletier from La Broquerie and together they raised two daughters and one son. They were also grandparents of nine grand children.

His working career saw him in various capacities: a labourer for the Corchite Munitions plant in Transcona, a lumber yard assistant foreman for Clayton Construction in St. Vital, lumber yard foreman for Toupin Lumber in Saint Boniface, back to Bruce Bros. and then to B.A. Construction as a heavy equipment operator. Among the many projects he contributed are: The Minaki Highway, the Richardson Building, the Trizec Complex, the Bank of Montreal Building (Portage at Hargrave), the Convention Centre, the Holiday Inn downtown, the Winnipeg Centennial Library, the Pan-Am Pool, the University of Manitoba campus extensions as well as the overpass in the Perimeter Highway, Lagimodiere Boulevard and #1 Highway.

John Bruce Road was subsequently divided by the development of Royal Woods and Island Lakes subdivisions. The longest portion of John Bruce Road that lay in forestland has subsequently disappeared and a small portion of John Bruce Road from the CPR tracks to Island Shore Blvd. Was renamed "Pamela Road". A city clerk inadvertently let it slip that the "City is in the process of changing all the old names" and this made to the chagrin of the Bruce family.

Joseph Bruce devoted a large part of his adult life to the preservation of our heritage and ensured the survival of L'Union National through the "leave years" when hardly a handful of Metis supported the organization.

Joseph Bruce was a man blessed with a wonderful personality and a keen sense of humour and he was much in demand as a master of ceremonies presiding at Social functions not only for L'Union National but also for many community events and church celebrations.

In 1992, at his wife's funeral, he paid tribute to her unfailing devotion to him and their children; he would not have had the privilege of serving the Union Nationale, the Church and his Community, had it not been for her.

(Contributed by Gabriel Dufault.)



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