



## In celebration of a life well lived...

**Moments of Grace**  
**March 19, 2015**



Our church said farewell to a good friend this week. On Monday Mr. Mel Woodward of Happy Valley-Goose Bay passed away at the age of 81. Mel was a well-known business and community leader who, although born in Newfoundland, made Labrador home for most of his life. Successful in most things he turned his hand to; he built a very large and prosperous business not only in Labrador but also in the rest of the province and in the north beyond Labrador. His success enabled hundreds of others over many decades to find secure work with dignity for themselves and their families. His loss is felt across Newfoundland and Labrador but I know that his legacy continues in good hands for the future.

I first met Mel back in the 1980's when, as a young deacon, I was appointed to the Parish of Lake Melville with responsibilities on both the north and south coasts of Labrador. It was a time of great military activity of the airfield at Goose Bay with flight training in full swing involving various NATO air forces. No housing could be found for myself and my wife and young child until Mel intervened and made it possible for us to live on the base for the duration of my ministry there. He considered it important that the church be supported and staffed as fully as possible. A few months later when it came time for me to be ordained priest we found ourselves in the midst of a winter storm that shut down all transportation across the region. Bishop Mate was trapped on the coast and unable to come to Happy Valley-Goose Bay for the service. That is until Mel intervened once more and ensured that the Bishop arrived safe and sound so that I could be ordained. I and many other clergy could give countless other examples of Mel's quiet support of our church over the years but I won't; he never wanted to draw attention to the things he did and I won't do that either except for the two occasions named above. In my letter to Sibyl and the family this week I told them that our Diocese and the Anglican Church in Labrador are not only thankful for Mel's support over the years but that our church is better because of his kindness and generosity.

During my time of knowing him Mel was not an every Sunday kind of churchgoer but he was a believer and a supporter. He had something in common with Winston Churchill who described his

relationship with the church as something of a flying buttress supporting the institution from the outside, rather than a pillar holding up the roof from within. But the truth is, Mel Woodward was a little of both.

I saw Mel a couple of times during his most recent illness, at Happy Valley-Goose Bay and at St. John's. He was jolly and really appreciated a prayer and a blessing. His final words to me when I saw him for the last time were familiar: "Is there anything I can do for you?" My response was to tell him, "No, just get well again." But that was not to be and on Monday past Mel entered into his eternal reward.

This grateful deacon, priest and bishop remembers him fondly today as he is laid to rest.

I have no doubt that God also remembers him fondly as the celebration of a life well lived takes place at St. Andrew's Church in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory!

**+Geoff**