



## **Marcel Jean Albert LaFontaine (1939-2011)**

Marcel was born in The Pas, Manitoba and passed away peacefully at St Anthony's Hospital, The Pas, on Saturday October 22, 2011 at the age of 72 years. Marcel was always a hard worker and was very athletic in his youth. He enjoyed swimming in the summer and swam across the Saskatchewan River several times, and once dived off the top of the railway bridge over the river.

At age thirteen Marcel's life was changed when he suffered from sleeping sickness (Encephalitis). The struggle with this sickness left him with a lifelong disability with issues of co-ordination and balance. Marcel admired Sir Douglas Bader, a man who lost both of his legs in a plane crash and, against all odds, became an Ace pilot during the Battle of Britain was Marcel's role model and lifelong inspiration to never let his disability get the best of him. Marcel stubbornly fought to overcome his loss of a sense of balance and lack of coordination.

Marcel attended Sacred Heart School, and The Pas Collegiate Institute for a time. He was self educated in almost any issue and had a thirst for knowledge. An avid reader all his life, he read hundreds (perhaps thousands) of books of all types. Marcel worked at the RCAF DEW line radar base at Bird and Cranberry Portage, MB. Then he moved to a job in the new town of Thompson where he worked for the Thompson Supply Company, Strand Billiards, and the Thompson Inn. After his family relocated to The Pas, Marcel followed suit in 1981. He became involved with the MLPH, now the MLPD (Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities) and served with the provincial MLPD (1986-93). One project he was proud of was improving accessibility of sidewalks and businesses. Marcel worked with others to secure funding which resulted in the building of the Pine View Manor for handicapped persons and the elderly. Marcel served on the board for The Pas Handi-Van until his death.

Marcel found he could do more for the MLPD and became provincial President. Rather than relocate he stayed in The Pas and commuted every couple of weeks via Grey Goose Bus to conduct business. He served as provincial council vice-president (1986-88) and president of MLPD (1988-91) until a stroke left him even more disabled. In 1991 he was awarded the Council of Canadians with Disabilities Award for his outstanding contribution to the advancement of disability rights in Canada.

He bought a three wheel bike to save on cab fares and was often seen peddling everywhere. After a stroke, Marcel finally agreed to get a scooter and he was soon on the road again! Marcel lived at Pine View Manor from its opening until he passed away. During this time he made many friends there and was involved with the Pine View Tenants' association. Marcel's loved to visit with all his family and reminisce about all their adventures, play cards and games. If there was a Montreal Canadien game on...you had better be cheering for the right team. He moved his sister, Elaine, to The Pas in 1995 so he could care for her and visited her through all kinds of weather on his scooter or using the handi-van. Marcel never complained or ever felt sorry for his disability, stating that there were always others who were worse off than him.

Marcel was a Third Degree member of the Charlebois Council of the Knight of Columbus and an Associate Member of The Royal Canadian Legion Branch #19.

Marcel was laid to rest beside his parents at Lakeside Cemetery in The Pas Manitoba. Pall bearers: Remi LaFontaine, Gilles LaFontaine, Louis LaFontaine, Gene Hrabarchuk, Wayne Hall, Robin Roberge Honorary Pall bearers: Mike Szadiak, Umberto Willner, Heather MacKenzie Erin Legace, Sue Franklin, Ellie Marsh as well as ALL of his friends and residents at Pine View Manor.

Honor Guard: The Knights of Columbus