

# **Brian L. Jickling**

**July 7, 1942 - June 13, 1996**

**CAROL** - As we come together today to celebrate the life of a remarkable man, our hearts are sorrowful and yet our memories are joyful as we remember a man who has shared his life so richly and about whom we are privileged to be able to say "he was a treasured colleague and a precious friend."

**ERICH** - It was the fall of 1967 at a meeting of the Calgary Biology Teachers' club that I first was introduced to a dynamic biology teacher from William Aberhart named Brian Jickling who also was a founding member of the Calgary Biology Teachers' Club. It was my first year with the Calgary Board of Education and it was Brian's third year of teaching. This was to be the start of a collaboration and friendship that has lasted over 28 years. Within a couple of years, Brian was elected president of the Biology Teachers' Club and I had the opportunity to work closely together with him on the executive. He provided leadership to all biology teachers in Calgary and in the 1980's, Brian was elected a second time by his peers as president of the now renamed Calgary and District Biology Teachers' Association. During that time, Brian worked on many Alberta Teachers' Association and Alberta Education committees dealing with science education. He also represented Biology Teachers on the Environmental Education Committee of the Alberta Environment Conservation Authority.

In 1977, Brian was persuaded to make the move from William Aberhart High School to Sir Winston Churchill High School. Brian became the third Brian in our department and soon we referred to him as "Jickling" or simply "Jick" in order help clarify which Brian we were talking about or to. He has taught Biology, Chemistry and General Science since then, apart from one year in 1988, when Brian went as an exchange teacher to Australia. His stories of his

travel experiences, and adventures entertained us for years. Brian taught junior and senior high school science and math at a high school in Glen Waverly - a suburb of Melbourne. Brian returned to us in January 1989 after stopping off in the Fiji Islands and other exotic places.

**CAROL** - That year was, in fact, to be the first time we experienced the void that could be left when "Jick" wasn't around. Along with "Jick" I remember another nickname we had for him - the salt of the earth. I don't think he ever knew that we spoke of him that way but it referred to the way in we knew he was as solid as a rock, totally dependable and reliable - as someone who could be counted on - as someone who was needed.

**ERICH** - As Department Head I often deputized Jick, calling on him many times to take over when I was away on sick leave. Just last Tuesday in my absence, he had willingly agreed to represent the department at a meeting. Brian Jickling could be trusted and counted upon to do the jobs that needed to be done and do them right. Typically, last Wednesday, he had taken home the Science 10 Final Examination to complete the final edit before attending the Athletic Awards Night at the school later that evening. Over the years, Brian ably represented our department on the school's professional development committee and the social committee.

For me personally, Brian was my friend, colleague and confidant. Principals and many staff come and go but for the past 18 years or so - I, the science staff and this school always knew that Brian Jickling would be there for us. Brian let me bounce ideas off him and he would give

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**me solid, sound advice. I sought his opinion many times. His perspective on the role of the teacher and schooling in public education always pointed to his guiding principles - strive for excellence and see the person in the student. His sensitivity, tact and diplomacy and the famous Jickling smile provided for students and staff a sense of positive optimism. He willingly gave of his knowledge, his skills and himself.**

**CAROL** - It strikes me that it would have been typical of Brian to be modest about the professional accomplishments that have been cited. Many probably are unaware of his contributions to Science education because their memories surround what they know of Brian as a man - as a friend, as a neighbor, as a father, as a church and community member - but that's the beauty of the guy, the measure of the man is the constancy of his whole way of being. In all aspects of his life he was a man who chose to put other peoples needs ahead of his own, to act in accordance with the highest principles of honesty, integrity and compassion- to operate from a fully-realized sense of purpose which was predicated on goodness and honor and peace and sincerity. People don't generally choose education as a career for either the salary or the glory. Rather they, and Brian epitomizes this, they find personal meaning in contributing to the betterment of society by enabling and encouraging young people to make sense of the world around them.

**ERICH** - I remember Brian as an enthusiastic man who loved nature and life and all living things. I remember Brian as a teacher who loved learning about new labs, new field trips, and new ways of presenting Biology to students. I remember early morning hours collecting mayfly, stonefly and caddisfly samples from the Sheep River. I remember going on Biology

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Teacher field trips organized by Brian that taught us to recognize the flora and fauna of Alberta and how they interact. Brian would travel to Disney World just to get some Mickey Mouse Ears which he would wear in class in order to illustrate the molecular structure of H<sub>2</sub>O, an abstract concept, to his students. Brian believed in what he taught and whom he taught - his students. Often, Brian and I would talk of life and its fragility and its interconnectiveness and its beauty. Brian loved nature and its many mysteries. Most weekends Brian and his family would be at his acreage near Sundre - his land. I remember Brian the Bee Magnate and Honey Baron, a fitting hobby for Jick the farming boy from Brock, Saskatchewan who understood the stewardship of the land and of living things which he appreciated and practiced throughout his life.

**CAROL** - Brian was known for his prairie-rooted sense of humor. He had a wise homily for most any occasion. When certain colleagues became irritable and vexed over relatively trivial matters, he would say, "It ain't worth the wear and tear on the chickens." He found laughter in so many things and such pleasure in the small things of daily life, from students' impudent messages on their t-shirts to a tray of puffed wheat squares and strawberries served at staff meetings. He always had a kind word and a smile for those who had brought him the pleasure.

**ERICH** - I remember Brian as the quiet, supportive colleague who always kept his cool and his sense of humour no matter what. Brian remembered colleagues' birthdays and anniversaries. Brian gave a smile to his colleagues whenever he sensed that life or school or whatever was getting us down.

**CAROL** - He always had time for impromptu chats - to inquire, to encourage, to console and mostly to chuckle. He had what one colleague called "a soft easy manner" and another called "a gentle way."

**ERICH** - Brian knew that people connecting with each other is what teaching and living is all about. In the community of his peers, he looked forward to the St. Louis seminars during the noon hours of Teachers' Convention and was a founding member of the S.W.C. Cum Otium Dignitate Society's Friday POETS Club.

Brian not only left his mark as a Science Teacher in this school but also in the traditions and culture of the school as a whole. He was always involved in everything in the life of the school. Brian encouraged students every year to participate in the Science Enrichment Program. He spent many hours mentoring and supporting them. For over 15 years, Brian was in charge of organizing the Graduation Ceremonies and, with Mr. Cantrill, the Grad Committee functions of this school. Many of his ideas and suggestions are incorporated into this major school function.

**CAROL** - We were at the Churchill graduation banquet last Saturday- a particularly poignant occasion this year and we were struck by how in his typical quiet unassuming manner Jick had left his mark there too. We spent the evening identifying Jicklingisms - from what the Grad Booklet looks like to the order of the ceremonies and even how the grad committee is chosen. So his memory lives on in every Churchill graduation and in the innumerable ways he has influenced everyone in the school community. In the past few days we have been receiving messages of condolence and invariably someone who I had never known had any connection with Brian would recall a kindness

done or an encouraging word said that had meant so much at the time it was needed that it had never been forgotten.

**ERICH - Over the years, Brian Jickling became the Cooperating Teacher of many student teachers. He guided them and mentored them to strive for excellence and to care for students. Brian Jickling was an outstanding, solid teacher. Parents knew that their son or daughter would be in good hands when they were in Jick's classes. He was trusted and respected. He served as a role model for all of us. He did make a difference - a positive, meaningful difference that great teachers always make in the many lives that they touch.**

**CAROL - In a most profound way part of Brian does live on. After years of introducing students to the HOPE (Human Organ Procurement and Exchange Program) in a final act of generosity, Brian's family has acted upon his request stated on his donor card that he would wish his organs to be donated to others that they may have better lives. How typical, how compassionate, how truly Brian.**

**ERICH - So, Brian, we, your fellow teachers, miss you and we grieve with your family. But we know that your contribution to all of us as a friend, colleague and teacher will live in our hearts and minds.**

**Auf Wiedersehen, Brian. Till we meet again.**

- Carol and Erich Berndt