

E.C. McTavish - Mr. Integrity

Reflections upon a life greatly lived can take on the nature of a legend, and legends can grow with the passage of time and the dimming of our memories. But not with Ernie McTavish!

From his first assignment as a teacher of Physical Education and Geography at London South Collegiate in 1946, Ernie's dedication to principle and greatness of spirit prevailed in his career and touched those with whom he came in contact. His strong, positive spirit remains with those who worked with him and learned from him. It is as though his presence was but a moment ago and no embellishment is possible, let alone necessary, to express his impact.

His leadership was early recognized in his elevation to Head of the Physical Education Department at South in 1947. To his students, he became known fondly as "Mr. Mac". Although a large man with a booming voice, "Mr. Mac's" constant smile inspired confidence. Strong ethics dominated his thoughts and actions and his caring nature endeared him to others. He believed strongly in the value of hard work and self-discipline, and his warm, supportive manner inspired others to adopt this approach. Ernie never criticized. He had too strong a faith in the fundamental goodness of others. When disaster struck, as it did in Mr. Mac's life, he displayed unprecedented equanimity.

In his role as Vice Principal at G.A. Wheable Secondary School, which he was appointed in 1961, and his tenure as Principal at Westminster Secondary School, beginning in June, 1964, Ernie McTavish established himself as a principled leader who worked with his staff to solve their problems, but more importantly, to take advantage of their challenges. His positive, good-humoured, and confident manner inspired an unquenchable enthusiasm to achieve. And this same spirit imbued his tenure as Principal of H.B. Beal Secondary School to which he was appointed in 1967. Often professionals distinguish between the considerations of career and personal life; but such a distinction for Ernie was impossible. The strong ethics ruling his private life governed the practice of his profession, yet, his caring practical wisdom could achieve compromise satisfactory to both sides in tough controversial issues. In the conduct of his office as Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum from January, 1970 and Superintendent of Operations from June, 1970, he became known as "Mr. Integrity". We lost his physical presence on January 15, 1973, but his legacy lives on.