

**G. Leslie Wilson, P.Eng.
1924 – 2008**

**Submitted by Jack Young
(With contributions by Jo Anne Wilson and Rev. Wood.)**



Les Wilson passed away at South Muskoka Memorial Hospital on September 4, 2008 after a long struggle with Parkinson's.

He is survived by his wife Martha Wilson (nee Duke), daughters Jo Anne Wilson (Bellville) and Karen Hopkins (Calgary), grandfather of Mark and Katharine Hopkins and his brother Bruce (Marjorie). He was predeceased by his son Robert, his son-in-law Douglas Hopkins, his one sister and two of his brothers.

He was born near Rosseau, only 60 kilometres from his burial site in Bracebridge, on January 5, 1924. He attended public school in Muskoka and at the end of grade 10, he travelled by train to Western Canada to find work however returned to work in the mines in Sudbury. He joined the Navy in 1942 (and this is a very typical "Les Wilson" story – he and a co-worker were waiting for the bus on a frigid day in Sudbury. They decided that if the bus heading to the mines came first they would go to work, but if the bus into town came first, they would go SIGN UP – guess which bus came first). He served on minesweepers in the North Atlantic and on D-Day. He was part of the Canadian Navy that went into Omaha – the American landing site – a little known fact of history. He was proud of his service but reluctant to share his experiences.

He met the love of his life at a dance when he was home on leave from the war and saw a young teacher who, at first, was a little resistant but Les won Martha Duke over and they were married in Sundridge on July 5, 1947. Their love has made it through 61 years of marriage.

On his discharge from the Navy in 1945, Les took advantage of the educational program available to veterans. He completed his high school and graduated as a Civil Engineer from the University of Toronto in 1951. As a Professional Engineer in the municipal engineering field, he held positions in London,

Lindsay, Sudbury, Jamaica, Etobicoke, Cambridge and Bracebridge. He retired from the position of District Engineer of the District of Muskoka in 1989.

Les was a dedicated Rotarian for over 50 years - in all of the places that he worked. He was the recipient of the "Distinguished Service Award" and was a "Paul Harris Fellow". His commitment to Rotary was best described at his memorial service by fellow Rotarian Darcy Hammond who stated: "Les was the best damn Rotarian I have ever known".

In his retirement years Les spent a lot of his summers at their cottage on Skeleton Lake and he and Martha spent 10 years wintering in Florida. He loved to putter around fixing things and he was a very accomplished bird carver. There was no crossword that he could not finish.

In 1989 Les was appointed as a Lay Councilor of the Association. His particular duty was to look after the public interest in the operation of the Association. In council meetings, Les had the unique ability of asking the right question at just the right time to keep the discussion on track.

Over his six years on the Association Council, he gave freely of his wisdom, professional experience, fairness, and good judgment, and quickly earned the respect of the members of the Association. While the Association benefited from his efforts, Les often mentioned how fortunate he was to be involved with a new group of professionals in the twilight of his career.

Les and Martha enjoyed the social aspects of the group as well, and attended our Annual General Meeting in February each year and the summer get-to-gathers' - often held in Muskoka at Windermere.

Les had a great sense of humour and was one of those people who could come back with a one-liner that put everyone in stitches.

We will miss Les's wit and dry humour.