

## **CULTURAL MOMENT FOR JULY 14, 2025 CELEBRATES MIKE MURPHY**

*When researching for this Cultural Moment, there was much to be learned about Mike Murphy. While we could have tried to sum up this most interesting man, Campbell Cork's editorial titled "The Memorable Murph" in the March 2006 issue of the Biz Bull said it best:*

He could be charming, bullheaded and funny.

Mike Murphy was the son of one of Mount Forest's most prominent families and he may have had a shot at the NHL if he could have put his mind to it. As it was, he played minor hockey in town and went on to play Junior A before coming back home to pursue his fate. He became Mount Forest's resident daredevil and a most ardent champion of the view that if you weren't born here, you really didn't have a right to say much about the place. He had his detractors but also a faithful following.

Mike Murphy was most often a man with a mission.



He was the last of his family to live in town and he single-handedly insured that the Murphy name will live on in the memory of the community. The family owned several mills on the Saugeen at the Highway 6 bridge. Anyone who has ever referred to the park by the millpond as anything other than "Murphy's Park" or the millpond as anything other than "Murphy's Pond" could expect to be corrected in no uncertain terms. And commenting such as error in print was an even greater crime, in Mike's view, and I heard from him on numerous occasions.

There were stories of him flying an airplane under the Murphy Bridge, and he was more than a little proud of his connections to the military, and particularly the US Air Force, although it was a little difficult to pin him down on exactly what that connection was.

In the 1980s, many of us witnessed him go over the Murphy's Dam in a barrel and more recently he took centre stage with his many efforts to get aloft in his parasail on fields around Mount Forest known as The Murphy Property. For several years he was passionately involved in an attempt to get into the Guinness Book of Records for parasailing out over Lake Ontario. He even purchased a boat for the effort.

He served a couple of terms on Mount Forest council in the 1980s at a time when smoking during a council meeting was still permitted. He was the bane of fellow councillor Susan Wetmore, who was championing the cause for making the council chambers smoke-free.

Mike, like no other, could drive Susan to distraction at warp speed.

One night during a council meeting, Susan suggested that the smokers on council step outside if they needed a smoke.

Mike snapped back that it would make more sense if the non-smokers stepped outside while the smokers lit up inside.

Most of us who knew Mike have our own favourite Murph story. He was always happy to share an opinion with anyone who cared to listen.

In September 2005, Mike was seriously injured while attempting, once again, to get aloft in his parasail. He was 68 years old at the time. He never recovered from those injuries, although at one point he was up and walking around in the Owen Sound hospital. He died in February 2006.

His greatest desire was to entertain and to be noticed by us.

He did both.

*From the March 2006 issue of the Biz Bull, written by Campbell Cork*