

Ruth Brown

by David Bischoff

I feel honored that Ruth's daughters asked me to speak today. I know there are few people in this gathering who knew Ruth longer than I did. However, I was first introduced to Ruth by her father in 1949. I developed a long relationship with him and had the greatest admiration for him. As my teenage and college years passed, I spent countless enjoyable evenings with him, primarily with him telling me the early history and about the people of East Orford. When Ruth's father died in 1975, Ruth was there to take his place. I believe Ruth was the oldest native of East Orford at the time of her death.

We all know what Ruth stood for. Among her so many good qualities she was a very caring person. She took time out in her early teaching years to care for her mother who died in 1948. She spent countless hours not only as a daughter, but as a friend in the final years of her father's life caring for him. Linda, Diane, and Lori inherited Ruth's trait of caring. In recent months the girls provided the help and 24-hour care that Ruth needed. This made it possible for Ruth to stay at home except for her last week.

Ruth was an inspiration to all who knew her. Stop and think for just a moment how many students, parents, and fellow colleagues she influenced.

Although Ruth and I could talk about anything, even politics, Ruth's favorite topic, like her dad's, was the people and early history of East Orford. When Ruth's short-term memory started to fail her, she would get embarrassed and frustrated and would begin to shed a few tears. However, no matter what we were talking about I would change the subject back to the old days she would snap out of her confusion, smile and off we would go.

For the last 20 years, each spring I would take Ruth a small bouquet of May flowers/arbutus. They were a favorite. I think I know of every place in East Orford that they grow thanks to Ruth.

Several weeks following, I would take daffodils to Ruth. One year she said to me, "I wish you could have seen the special daffodils my mother had in her garden out East that eventually died out." She described the daffodil to me as being double of sorts, but nothing she had ever seen in a seed catalog. Well, one night was at a friend's house in Wentworth whose grandfather had worked for the same two ladies that Ruth's father had worked for in the '30s. Among all the daffodil was a variety I too had never seen. I picked half a dozen and the next day I went to see Ruth. I walked in with the daffodils behind my back and said, "I have what I hope is a special surprise." Her face was beaming and I said, "Are these the ones?" She started to cry, stood up, and gave me a big hug and said, "Wherever did you find them?" The expression on her face, and the delight she showed is something I will never forget, and that incident will be in my memory forever.

Thank you.