**Earl Naswell**

**January 21, 1931 – October 6, 2020**

*A Life of Kindness, Community, and Legacy*

Born in Minnedosa, Manitoba, to John and Mary Naswell, Earl Naswell was a humble man whose quiet compassion would leave an indelible mark on the Comox Valley. A devoted father of seven, grandfather of fourteen, and great-grandfather of thirteen, Earl was a family man first and foremost. He worked hard throughout his life and instilled the values of generosity, resilience, and care in his children: Elaine, Karen, Dale, Debbie, Wendy, Ken, and Ronnie.

In 1982, with little more than goodwill and determination, Earl began what would become one of Vancouver Island’s most cherished traditions: the **Earl Naswell Community Christmas Dinner**. Initially intended to feed a few friends who were "a bit down on their luck," Earl walked door-to-door to local businesses asking for support. The community responded with overwhelming generosity, and the first dinner was held in 1983.

That small gathering evolved into an annual event that now feeds **over 500 people** every Christmas Day — not just the homeless, but seniors, singles, families, and anyone needing connection or care. Volunteers show up in such numbers that organizers routinely have to turn people away. The Filberg Center in downtown Courtenay has hosted the dinner for decades, complete with hot meals, caroling, and fellowship — and a front-row seat always saved for Earl.

Until his final year, Earl continued to attend the dinner with his family, warmly thanking volunteers and sharing a “Merry Christmas” before heading home. His humility never waned. “I never dreamed it would grow into this,” he once told a friend.

Earl passed away on October 6, 2020, at Cumberland Lodge, at the age of 89. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, his family was unable to be at his side, a painful reality shared by many during the pandemic. A **Drive-By Memorial** was held on October 19th, 2020, where friends and community members paid their respects from their vehicles at his Courtenay home — rain or shine.

In lieu of flowers, donations were encouraged to continue Earl’s mission through the **Earl Naswell Community Christmas Dinner**, ensuring his legacy of love and service continues.

As Courtenay Mayor Bob Wells said,

“Earl exemplified the very best in our community… His legacy will live on through those that volunteered and enjoyed his dinner over the years.”

Longtime volunteer Rob James added,

“We were always humbled when he arrived with his friends and family… He will be greatly missed, but the legacy of Earl Naswell will live on, especially on Christmas Day.”

Earl’s story is a reminder that one person — through simple kindness — can build something that feeds hearts and souls for generations.