

A Tribute to Ben McMillen

Chief Operating Office at Telecom Corporation of New Zealand 1993-96

Ben McMillen passed away on 12 April 2016 in the United States.

As CEO of Telecom, I not only worked very closely and successfully with Ben but he and his wife Norma also became close friends with Gillian and me. We still retain some of the generous and thoughtful gifts Norma and Ben gave us. We had some wonderful times together and the friendship was such that Ben and Norma spent one Xmas Day at our home with our families. They were caring and generous and warm and great fun to be with.

At work, as the Chief Operating Officer of Telecom for three years, Ben was the ultimate professional, splendidly knowledgeable, always willing to share that knowledge, highly intelligent and thoughtful, an adept and able manager who set a great example with his overwhelming work ethic, but someone who always found time to teach and to mentor, especially younger people. Despite the major changes the company needed to make to succeed commercially, Ben had much empathy for his staff and was totally customer oriented. These wonderful talents were adapted with an apparent ease to the New Zealand environment and to our somewhat different culture such that he was both a very successful leader and indeed innovator at Telecom NZ but was also hugely well liked and admired by all of us. They were both real Americans of course but they could equally well have been New Zealanders.

As CEO at the time, I was the person who asked Ben to take up the role as Chief Operating Officer at Telecom. It would rank as one of the best decisions I made. His contribution to the company was enormous and customers, staff and shareholders were all the ultimate beneficiaries of his highly successful leadership. Telecom was to become the largest listed company in New Zealand.

Although Ben's family will miss him greatly, he has now found peace after a life lived to the full and one comprising such extensive and always unselfish contributions to many others. We will remember Ben, as we do Norma, with great warmth and affection, as indeed will all those who had the privilege of working with him and knowing them both.

Gillian and I have sent our warmest sympathy to Ben's family. We will be forever grateful for knowing Ben and Norma and for being their friends, to say nothing of the stimulating years of working together.

Roderick Deane

The posting on the US funeral home web site is as follows:

<http://www.varcoethomasfuneralhome.com/obits/obit.cfm?obitid=2390>

Oliver Benton McMillen, Jr. of Hatboro, PA passed away on Tuesday, April 12, 2016 in Memory Care at the Park, Hatboro, PA. He was 83.

Born in Lower Burrell, PA to the late Oliver Benton McMillen and Sylvia (Moore) McMillen, over the years, Ben resided in Irwin and Warrington, PA, Wellington, New Zealand, Buckingham, PA, and Ann's Choice, Warminster, PA before moving to Hatboro, PA two years ago.

Ben started his career with Bell of PA (now Verizon) in 1950 as a switch technician. In 1951, he interrupted his career and joined the Army during the Korean War. Ben rose to the rank of Sergeant in the Army Security Service. Upon leaving the Army, he entered the University of Pittsburgh, taking classes at night while continuing his career during the day. In 1959, he graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering.

After college, Ben's career followed a rare path, with assignments at Bell Laboratories, various district and division level management roles, and finally he was appointed as Vice President, Network Engineering, Purchasing and Logistics for Bell Atlantic. Ben's career then took on an international flair and he moved to New Zealand to become Chief Operating Officer with New Zealand Telecom.

Ben was a member of Thompson Memorial Presbyterian Church of New Hope; former Mason and enjoyed playing golf. He especially enjoyed spending time with his three granddaughters and family.

He was the beloved husband for over 50 years of the late Norma Jean (Jacoby) McMillen, whom was his childhood sweetheart; devoted father of Lorraine Foltz and husband Rick, Keith McMillen and wife Lisa; dear brother of Jean Alerich; and loving grandfather of Caitlin Fogelsong and husband Ryan, Cory and Chloe McMillen.