

Rocky Mountain News

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David Bucknam had a love of the wild and a passion for Porsches

By Lisa Ryckman, Rocky Mountain News
December 14, 2004

The highest peaks and the deepest tunnels dominated the terrain of David Bucknam's life, along with leather seats and the deep blue sea.

"He had this lust for life," says Loretta Pineda, a colleague of Mr. Bucknam's for more than 20 years. "Working for him was very easy. Whatever you wanted to do, he tried to make it happen. He wanted everybody to have something they could call their own."



David Bucknam organized Porsche tours.

Advertisement

An advertisement for "Phones Plus". The word "Phones" is in large blue font, and "Plus" is in a smaller black font next to a red plus sign. Below the text, there are four mobile phones of various models and colors (blue, silver, black). At the bottom, there is a blue banner with white text that says "Click here for a free phone!". The background of the ad is a light, abstract pattern.

A longtime employee of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Mr. Bucknam died Nov. 22 of skin cancer. He was 60.

Born in Brockport, N.Y., Mr. Bucknam moved to Lakewood in grade school and fell in love with mountain climbing and skiing. He joined the Colorado Mountain Club's junior group, where he met a 14-year-old named Susan. They were married six years later.

"You always knew you were safe with him," says his wife of 38 years. "You were never lost with him, in any sense of the word."

Mr. Bucknam spent more than 20 years at the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, where he rose to director of the Office of Active and Inactive Mines and oversaw the reclamation or safeguarding of 6,500 of the state's 23,000 abandoned mines.

"He was one of those people you look up to because he's so good at teaching and communicating and leading other people," his wife says.

Mr. Bucknam drove his co-workers crazy with his uncanny ability to recognize any spot in Colorado from nothing more than a generic photo.

"It could have been anywhere, but he always knew where it was. It was kind of maddening," Pineda

says. "He just had a real sense of place, where he was all the time."

Mr. Bucknam spent the day of his retirement in fall 2003 on a sailboat off Antigua, toasting his career with rum drinks. Sailing was another passion, and he took several Caribbean boating trips every year.

"He lived life on his own terms," Susan Bucknam says. "We never waited to do anything."

As a member of the Rocky Mountain Region of the Porsche Club of America, Mr. Bucknam hit the high-performance driving circuit 12 years ago in a red 911 with the license plate "PORTIA." He became an instructor and liked to organize three-day tours that would take people into remote parts of the state.

Mr. Bucknam's tours always included route instructions peppered with roadside geology, mining-town history, flora, fauna and trivia - 40 pages of details for a three-day trip.

"The goal of the first one was how many Continental Divide crossings we could do in three days," his wife says.

The answer: 13.

Although he had become very ill, Mr. Bucknam drove this fall in the annual Halloween auto cross that he and his wife organized every year. It was always the club's final annual event, and costumes were encouraged for car and driver alike.

"He always had a smile on his face, a twinkle in his eye. It showed through everything he did," his wife says. "We laugh when we remember him."

In addition to his wife, Mr. Bucknam is survived by sons Alan, of Wheat Ridge, and Peter, of Denver; brothers Bob Bucknam, of Arvada, and John Bucknam, of Lakewood; and grandchildren Sophie and Piper.

A celebration of Mr. Bucknam's life is scheduled for 5 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at the Wheat Ridge Recreation Center.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be sent to the Melanoma Research Program, 1665 Ursula St., Box F703, Aurora, CO 80110.

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