

Writer and journalist, Stevie Cameron, wrote a eulogy to Mordecai Richler in which she referred to his suggestions for her book on the Mulroney years called "On the Take." Richler advised Cameron to investigate Bruce Verchere. Cameron chased the tip and caught a tale worth a book of its own. Thus was born "Blue Trust".

"Blue Trust" reads like a drugstore thriller, except that the events are true. It's a political exposé revealing seedy, greedy details of the Mulroney years. On a deeper level, it's a case study of a man suffering from an undiagnosed, untreated, unnamed, terminal, mental illness.

Bruce Verchere, born in 1936, was the son of a lawyer who was a partner in a prosperous, prestigious Kamloops law firm with Conservative political connections. Bruce's father was appointed to the BC Supreme Court. In 1957 Bruce entered UBC and an elite social strata that guaranteed, almost effortlessly, jobs upon graduation that would be coveted by today's graduates. In spite of his gilded privilege, Bruce was a lacklustre student, but he coasted through undergraduate studies and law school assured of success.

On a marital rebound, after graduation, Bruce proposed to Lynne Walters. Fate had blessed Lynne. Her father was a banker. She supported the Conservatives and majored in commerce, not arts, home economics or nursing science, as did most contemporary female university graduates. She landed a job as a computer programmer for IBM - an unconventional occupation in 1963, especially for a woman.

Bruce and Lynne moved to Ottawa. He worked for the federal tax department. Then he entered private practice and sold his skills to those, like author Arthur Hailey, seeking to avoid not to evade taxes and with sufficient revenue to appreciate the distinction.

Lynne excelled too. She became the business manager for Bruce's firm and she started her own exceptionally profitable business selling software that she created for law firms. Good as the Vercheres were at business, they weren't always nice employers or business partners.

Verchere became a trusted financial advisor to Brian Mulroney. The Vercheres accompanied Mulroney on a trip to Washington and a White House dinner. They bought and completely renovated a lavish house in Montreal, an expensive cottage in Maine, and a Colorado ski condominium. They received from Arthur Hailey a \$15,000 membership in the Lyford Cay Club, an exclusive Bahamian retreat for wealthy tax avoiders. Verchere joined the Griffith Island Club, a private fishing and hunting club on Georgian Bay. When Bruce joined the club, the annual membership fee was \$25,000. Bruce became a pilot and bought two airplanes. He bought a sailboat from the upper-crust Hinckley boat works. He lied, cheated and was unfaithful to his wife. He promised at least two women that he would divorce Lynne, split their assets (mostly Lynne's assets) and remarry. He fretted that when the assets were split, his share would only be six million dollars and that wouldn't support him in comfort. The story spirals into an abyss.

What joy did the possessions amassed by Verchere provide? His hoarding was pathological. His material life was bloated, but his spiritual and emotional lives were less than empty. They were vacuums eroding him from the inside. He led a nightmarish dream-life.

Cameron describes in more detail the same malaise Edwin Arlington Robinson captured years earlier in the poem "Richard Cory." This illness isn't exclusive to the rich, but tales of their suffering sell. Bruce was afflicted by a familiar enemy. An enemy that may simmer undetected leaving friends and relatives perplexed after intermittent acts of unprovoked cruelty. Was Bruce Verchere a victim or a villain?