



REMEMBERING
Cornelius Wiebe (Casey)

June 26, 1926 - June 10, 2024



Casey was born to Kornelius and Elisabeth (Krahn) Wiebe in Chortitza, Ukraine, Russia - a German-speaking Mennonite community. The family moved to Franzfeld in 1939. Casey started working early to support his family after his father was arrested and killed in 1942. As the war moved into the Ukraine, he was drafted into the German army as a translator then joined the navy after accidentally being sent to the war front. He served on a minesweeper in the North Sea from 1944-45 (until the end of the war). He gained extra rations from other sailors by tattooing them. One tattoo was an anchor & life preserver, the other tattoo was a sailor's face & neck with the years 1944-45 below. During the war, he had a gun held to his head 3 times, but avoided being shot. After the war, he lived and worked on farms in Germany until he was able to emigrate via MCC sponsorship. Casey came to Canada aboard the 'Samaria' and landed in Halifax, Nov 1949, then went straight to Gretna, MB to pay off his debt. He also worked in Blumenort, then moved to Winnipeg for work where he met Maria (Mary) Dyck in English classes. They were engaged within 6 months and were married in June 1951. He started painting pictures on canvas after Mary gave him his first set of oil paints for Christmas, 1951. Marlene and Peter were born in Winnipeg before he moved the family to BC (to avoid the brutal Manitoba winters and to find more steady work). The family stayed with Mary's sister's family of 4, for 6 months in a tiny 3-bedroom house in Surrey. Casey bought a property and began building a house. Once the house was at lockup, the family moved in (around New Years Day 1960). No flooring, no interior doors, no counters, except for temporary plywood. Finishing the house happened slowly in the evenings and on weekends as budget allowed. Kathy was born later that year.

Casey worked both in Winnipeg and in Vancouver as a painter and paperhanger.

At one point he worked with Edmund Raeder in Winnipeg and it began a lifelong friendship with the Raeder's who also ended up in BC.

In the mid-1960's, Casey completed a correspondence Graphic Arts course with excellent grades but was unable to find full time work in that field. His dedication and attention to detail made him valuable to his employers (Quartermaine and Sons, then Velvet Painting) who then gave him more specialized work, such as applying velvet to a wall behind a cross in a church, graphic designs on walls in a hospital and in the new Union building entrance, applying specialty cork wallpaper in a commercial building, etc. He also continued to paint pictures; mostly landscapes.

Casey kept in touch with one lifelong friend and coworker from the old country who had also moved to the Lower Mainland - Ben Braun. Through Ben, they built a close network of Mennonite friends - Braun's, Thiessen's, Huebert's - collectively known as 'the Bunch'. The Bunch grew to include the Penner's and Klassen's. The families enjoyed visiting each other throughout the year at each other's houses or at Cultus Lake on hot days. Each summer all would vacation in Osoyoos and later changed to Penticton - always stopping for breakfast in Manning Park on the way. After the kids had grown, the group also liked to go fishing at different lakes in BC.

Casey built and sold several houses in the Guildford area before building a new family home one street over from the original house and they moved into it around 1979. He actually drew up the plans himself.

Casey was a handy carpenter. He built benches, bookcases, bedframes and even built his own tool shed/workshop - complete with a window and flower box. He also designed his back yard mostly circular and cemented in a concrete bird bath in the center. He then rigged up his self-propelled lawnmower and tied it to the bird bath and watched as the lawnmower mowed the lawn by itself, wrapping the rope around the base of the bird bath. Neighbours watched in awe over the fence, as he enjoyed a beer on the sundeck.

Casey loved listening to music and going dancing with Mary. He was a good dancer and knew how to lead well. His favourite was the Tango. At home, there was usually music playing. He liked German Folk music and also Mexican music. He recorded hundreds of cassette tapes of music that he taped from either records or the German radio station - always looking for a good melody. He instilled in his children a love of music as well.

Casey retired around latter part of 1988 but was called back to work on one last project in 1989 - Camp Jubilee. Casey was the instructor for 6 apprentices chosen to paint several buildings inside and out, as well as flag poles, playground equipment, some of the dock and a giant mural on the exterior wall of the Wash House at the camp.

Casey and Mary moved to a condo in Abbotsford in 1993 and enjoyed the camaraderie of the neighbours in the building and walks around Mill Lake. Casey served on the Strata Council there for several years. They still hosted family gatherings there.

After Mary passed away in 2015, Casey slowed down and his mobility decreased. He moved into an apartment in Menno Terrace West in 2017 where he would remain in independent living. He loved to go down to the dining room for his hot lunch and made friends with his table mates. He survived the COVID pandemic only to catch COVID in May 2024 which began a roller coaster 12 days in hospital before finally succumbing to heart failure.

Casey is predeceased by wife Mary, and sisters Elisabeth Reimer and Helene Barker. Survived by sister Katharina Kosinski, children Marlene, Peter (Shawna) and Kathy (Mike); grandchildren Lisa, Kelsey, Samantha and Paul, and great-grandchild Meru.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, September 21st, 2024 from 1:00-4:00pm at Menno Terrace East 1 lounge, 2021 Primrose St., Abbotsford BC V2S 2Y9.

If inclined, consider donating to the Canadian Lung Association, MCC, Red Cross or other charity of your choice.

