



REMEMBERING
Waldemar Peter Penner (Wally)

November 8, 1941 - October 4, 2024



Waldemar Peter Penner entered this world on November 8, 1941 in Winnipeg, MB, a short distance from the family farm in Springstein, the fifth of six children, born to immigrant parents. He didn't care much for the name Waldemar, but in typical fashion, he didn't want to cause a ruckus: he'd figure something out. During his early years, he started out as Waldy, before switching to Walde (pronounced as Waldy, maybe the Euro version?), before settling on Wally, a name he truly loved.

Throughout his life, Wally never met a job he didn't like. At four years of age, his family relocated from Manitoba to Greendale, BC for the opportunity to own a grocery store and animal feed business and his work ethic began to take shape. Starting with driving the truck in the fields as an eight-year-old while others loaded hay bales onto the back, he soon progressed to slinging sacks of feed from the feed barn, before honing his self-taught driving skills and progressing to making feed deliveries. As a personal challenge, he decided to take his driver's test while driving an International three-ton truck. Of course he passed with flying colours! Throughout his post-secondary education, he dabbled in different types of jobs: night watchman, construction, landscaping and clean-up, and even tried his hand as a golf caddy despite his limited golf knowledge. When he moved to Fort St. John in 1974 to buy a 2,000-acre grain farm despite not knowing the first thing about grain farming, he got down to business and worked more than full time as a grain farmer until he sold the farm in the late 90s. He even built the family home with his own two hands during that time. Those years on the farm were supplemented with additional full-time jobs during the winter months: sports store, oil rigs, and then back to his true calling as a driver, driving a propane truck for different propane delivery companies - first Cigas, then Canadian Propane before it became ICG and then Petro-Canada. Whenever he had to leave a job, he was always told a position would be waiting for him if he ever returned. Wally was the ultimate provider for his family.

Sports played a huge role in Wally's life, starting with his introduction to sports in elementary school. Despite being an extremely shy and timid boy, Wally soon discovered athletic pursuits. As he became more adept, he found his confidence and, soon after, his voice. Soccer, baseball, basketball, football, volleyball, softball, track and field - there wasn't a sport he didn't love. He would spend hours throwing balls against the hip roof on the barn in order to practice chasing down fly balls. As a resourceful young man, he discovered that if he could drag out his cow-milking chores by juuuuuust long enough, his dad would get impatient and leave to deliver feed without him, allowing him to be free to attend his soccer matches. By the time he was 15, Wally was the most vocal player on the soccer pitch. And the accolades followed. Male aggregate track and field champion and male athlete of the year at MEI, numerous all-star team nominations in both baseball and soccer, and all the championships to show for it. While Wally was competing in all of these different activities, his father was from a different generation and did not see the value in his pursuits, so only once watched Wally play... and that stuck with him. As the years passed by, Wally continued his love for sports, illustrated by cheering on his favourite teams: the Canucks and the Dodgers. You knew better than to sit too close to him during an important game because he watched the game as if he was playing in it! As his children began to play different sports, he loved to watch them play and that continued on with his grandkids. He would get to as many competitions as possible. Hockey, speed skating, ringette, soccer, volleyball, basketball, field hockey - he watched it all and truly loved supporting his family, whether in person or via livestream, even waking up at 4am to catch a game across the country. Wally showed his kids and grandkids the encouragement and support in their pursuit of sport that he never received.

Wally was a soft spoken and humble man. As a young adult, he would cut out and save all the newspaper clippings that mentioned his athletic exploits in a box. For fear of becoming too proud, one day he decided to burn them all to ensure he didn't get a big ego. Wally never raised his voice. Throughout the years of owning the farm, the farm required many lead hands and support workers. Wally was happy to provide the training to anyone who wanted, or needed, to put in some time; there's a long list of family, friends, and others who received guidance and mentorship from Wally's farm school. And the one thing that they all talk about is his patience. It didn't matter whether a problem arose through stupidity or coincidence, Wally never displayed anger with anyone about anything. Even his friends talk about how they never saw him get into any type of argument... except maybe the time when he wouldn't accept gas money after driving a friend.

As a boy, Wally made a commitment to follow Christ which was tested over the years, particularly as he finished high school and began working full-time in his father's business. However, at the age of 22, Wally recommitted to following Jesus to the best of his abilities and as part of that journey, he decided to attend Briercrest Bible Institute in Caronport, SK. Wally graduated from Briercrest after three years, THEN completed his high school education the following year at the neighbouring Caronport high school as the class valedictorian (he had dropped out of high school in BC as soon as the soccer season finished to work for his dad), before finishing his post-secondary education with one year at Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois where he capped off his education with a Bachelor's degree in Biblical Studies.

Throughout the rest of his life, Wally put his trust in Jesus and gave Him control of his life. There were at least three occasions while driving his propane truck where he felt the Lord saved his life from serious accident or death, twice keeping his truck on an icy road and out of the adjacent creek, and once helping him get out of a burning propane truck involved in a collision. Wally's life was spent serving others as he believed Jesus would - living out the good news of the gospel.

While at Briercrest, Wally made regular trips to the library to get his sports update by reading the sports section of the Regina Leader Post. It was during one of these excursions that he happened to peak over the newspaper and lock eyes with a young lady named Julia. After dating for four years while he finished his educational journey and while she enrolled and finished nursing school, Wally and Julia married in Medicine Hat, AB in 1969 and promptly moved to Chilliwack, BC. Through the years, the two were partners and best friends in all aspects of their lives, supporting each other through every challenge. Buy a hobby farm in Chilliwack? Let's give it a try! Move to Fort St. John to try grain farming? Let's do it. Raise two children in rural northern BC? No problem. The love that they had for each other was deep and true and everlasting. When Julia was diagnosed with MS in 1984, Wally continued to support her, eventually selling the grain farm to provide a better situation for Julia and to provide for her the best way he knew how. When they moved to Abbotsford in 2000, Wally became Julia's primary care giver and stayed that way until three weeks before his death when he was admitted to hospital. Through thick and thin, he stuck by Julia's side and showed what it means to love, 55 years of marriage all told.

In early Sept 2024, Wally was scheduled for knee replacement surgery. In the lead up to his surgery, some health complications arose and he ended up being admitted to hospital. It was in the hospital in the middle of September that doctors discovered that cancer had invaded his body. Through the last weeks of his life, friends and family came to see Wally, pray together, and recount favourite memories and character traits that they admired about him. Early on Oct 4, 2024 and while completely at peace, Wally left this world.

Now it's over to the rest of us to take it from here.

Left to remember Wally are his wife Julia and his children Jennifer (Brent, grandchildren Nate, Jadon, Talia) and David (Jill, grandchildren Claire, Fiona, Madeline); His sister-in-law Alice Penner, sister Helen (Bill) Kuehn, brother-in-law Rudy Willms and numerous nieces and nephews; His sister-in-law Vimy Penner, sister-in-law Joyce (Emeric) Johnson, brother-in-law Gerry (Heather) Penner and numerous nieces and nephews; And many members of his extended family and friends.

Special thanks to the palliative care team at Abbotsford Regional Hospital and to Dr. Petrariu for their special care.

The celebration of Wally's life will be on Wednesday October 30 at 1:30pm at the Clearbrook MB Church with the livestream at:

<https://www.clearbrookmbchurch.ca/events/memorial-service/2024/10/Wally-Penner-Memorial-Service>

