



## REMEMBERING

# Henry Junior Wilkinson (Hank)

August 16, 1925 - August 16, 2023



It's with sad news that the family of Henry Junior Wilkinson (Hank) announce his peaceful passing within the 11th hour of August 16th 2023, on his Birthday, after turning 98. Hank pre-deceases his son Bryn (Carolyn), Grand Daughter Jana Hall (Andrew), Grandson Mitchell Hole(Kelly), Great grandkids Logan Henry, Malcolm James and Autumn Frances, and sister-in-law Glenys Lister. Hank's wife of 65 years, Doreen (née Truesdale) passed in 2015, and his brothers both Gord (Anne) and Ray (Anne) deaths preceded him as well. Hank was of sound mind to choose his own destiny and take his dignity with him, for which his family is immensely proud of him to have that amount of courage.

Hank was born in Comox, B.C., in 1925. He moved at a young age to Cumberland with his parents where he lived in 3 different homes and grew up in that community which was booming with the Coal mining industry. Hank worked in the local grocery store to help pay the grocery bills of the family, having 2 younger brothers, Gord and Ray, and also delivered groceries to various families, including the Knappett Construction Family home in Royston.

The family moved to Nanaimo in the early 1940s and shortly afterwards Hank applied to the Airforce, Navy, and Army, where he was finally accepted as WW2 was in motion. After qualifying for the Army he was chosen to be apart of the Radio Signal Core. After training he was assigned to one of the Regiments to be sent to Australia which role was to be mobile and monitor/ tap the Japanese radio communication in the South Pacific. Approximately 2 years were spent in Australia traveling mainly around the coastline and much time was spent in Darwin. After the war was over he spent at least 6 months waiting to return home before finally catching a freighter back to Canada and being discharged in Vancouver. During his time in Australia, Hank befriended Boyd Grant and others and remained friends with all for the rest of their lives. Reunions and trips to see them were in Hank and Doreen's itinerary for many years. After turning 92, Hank made a final road trip,

driving from Duncan to Minnedosa Manitoba, to see Boyd for the last time.

Once discharged from the Army Hank returned to Nanaimo where his Parents still resided. He applied for work in a Furniture store whom his Father Henry (Mike) knew the owners and Hank started his adult work career. Hank also applied later at BCTel which he was successful at getting employment with a company that was growing and changing with technology.

Hanks Career at BCTel encompassed 37 years of service. He started in Nanaimo in Construction then moved to Installation and Repair (I&R) before he was asked to be re-deployed to Duncan in the Cowichan Valley. He had a work mate who was being deployed to the Comox Valley and Hank approached his peer to see if he was willing to swap job assignments. The swapping positions was agreed to, however, his boss at the time didn't agree and Hank was told, "you go to where I tell you to go". Hank transferred to Duncan permanently. There he met Doreen Truesdale, his future wife, in the front office at the Stone building on Craig and Kenneth across from City Hall.

Most of Hank's career at BCTel was in the Cowichan Valley. He saw the move of BCTel from the Stone Building to where it still resides at 148 Ingram street. From working with Gord Denholm and John Neen in his early career to Barry Cassidy, George Minckler in his I&R career then many folks he managed after he was promoted to management by Skip Hawthornthwaite. Hank became a well know figure to the community at large when he managed the service centre and also liaised with the RCMP and other businesses and was available for call out during much of his career. From prewiring Crofton Pulp and Paper with Fred (Mickey) Sharp, installing multiline business phones and PABX, to seeing open wire technology change to Strowger switching then to electronic Central Office, Hank was involved through much of this for a fulfilling career.

Hank married Doreen Truesdale in 1950. After living an apartment life for several years they decided to purchase land on Miller Road that was originally owned by the McLay family, which were related to Doreen through wedlock with David Evans (Margret), her Grandfather. Before the property purchase Hank considered homesteading up in the Strathcona Park area around the Upper Campbell Lake region. Doreen was game, however, their thoughts obviously changed and they bought the property at 5405 Miller Road. The house was completed in 1959 as Hank assisting George Naylor in the construction. There they bought their first dog, a Boxer named Tinker, and gave birth to their one and only child Bryn. Many happy years were spent on the small acreage they called home and befriending many neighbours over the years including the Bossons, Still, Tiemer and Hawthorn families. Many family, friends, work friends and relatives stayed at the home as Hank and Doreen were always welcoming. From the many visits from the Baraletti family, to the Lew Truesdale family, Hank and Doreen stayed happily on the property after Hank had retired in 1983.

In 1993 Hank and Doreen sold the home and purchased their Condominium at 273 Coronation Avenue in Duncan. Since the family was down to them they decided to travel more without the overhead of 5405 Miller Road. From Japan to Australia to England to France, they spread their wings in the air and on the road. Volunteering

for the Duncan Historical Society and collaborating on the local book "Memories Never Lost" to Hank helping the upstart the Lawn Bowling Green, they had more time to spend away than to be at home. Hank and Doreen never moved again as both still lived on Coronation Avenue until each passed away.

Hank and Doreen immensely enjoyed their stays in Cox Bay, Tofino, for nearly 50 years. They befriended the Pettinger family and stayed many a time with family and friends at Pacific Sands Resort. Unit 173 became their "second home away from home." Chocolates were delivered every trip to the staff and the owner at the time, Dave, was strictly told by Doreen "these are not for you, they are for your staff." When Doreen passed away a memorial bench, donated by Pacific Sands, was installed overlooking the beach in front of unit 173 with Doreen's memorial plaque. Hank continued to visit with his family for a number of years afterwards but always felt something was missing. The family would like to thank the Pettingers and all the staff who made Hank and Doreen feel at home during their visits.

Hank's third love of his life, next to his wife and son, was Mountaineering and the outdoors. From the Matterhorn and the Swiss Alps to Mt Fujiyama and all the main notable mountains on Vancouver island, Hank was at home in these settings. He joined the Island Mountain Ramblers and Alpine club and met many fellow climbers and befriended a few as they climbed and camped on the Island mountains. While Doreen didn't have the same love affair Hank did have of the Alpine, she granted him the freedom to fulfill his soul up high. When Hank retired from BCTel he planned a trip to the Swiss Alps and to the Matterhorn where he was hoping to see the top. Unfortunately he was unable to see it as there were not enough guides available to escort him and the group. Base camp was as high as they could go. Hank's trip to the Alps was one of his most memorable adventures in the Mountains anywhere. On Hank's second trip to Japan he joined up with a local hiking club and they climbed Mt Fujiyama which also was very memorable for him.

During his membership with both Island climbing clubs he befriended Sid Watts and John Gibson. Many island climbs were done with these gentlemen. A list of 115 Mountains was found with dates, hiking party names and details of the trips and at least 75 % of these dates Hank's name was listed on these trips. Several mountains such as Arrowsmith, Whympier, and Landalt Hank had summited 4-5 times. The only mountain that eluded him was the Golden Hinde, Vancouver Islands tallest peak. Sid, John and Hank became involved with the Strathcona Park Advisory committee in 1988 to preserve Strathcona Park from over mining by Westin Mines and the lack of re-forestation from logging, along with input from a few hundred people. Their involvement along with the hundreds of others who's submissions and volunteer efforts "restored the balance". A report was issued by the Provincial Government titled "Restoring the Balance", an 88 page document, laying the ground work to preserve the park as it is today. It's a great example of how Hank felt for the wilderness and the mountains he loved so much.

Hank was one of the most consistent customers at the Duncan Farmers Market. Rain, shine, sleet, or snow, Hank would be there buying his needs every Saturday morning, walking with his walker from Coronation Avenue, to downtown and home again. Many people offered to give him a lift home during adverse weather and his answer was always the same; "No, thank you." Many folks at the

market will miss his presence every Saturday it's open. His determination kept him healthy and of sound mind without any formal medication before death. He would religiously attempt to go for a walk(s) each day in his 90s as it prolonged his life. He was a testament to what everyone should do to prolong their lives.

Hanks Family would like to extend their much appreciated thank you to the following for supporting Hank; The Coleman Clinic, Lynda Smith (Minckler) for being a friend and helping him in need, the neighbours at 273 Coronation, the Vendors at the Farmers Market who knew Hank and a special thank you to Louise Pickles and family who named their new Bakery in Duncan "Hank's Bakery Coffee & Provisions" as Hank and Doreen always enjoyed together a good Bakery item and a good strong cup of coffee.

There will be no formal service at Hank's wishes. The family will be gathering October 2024 to spread his ash to the Pacific Ocean in front of Doreen's memorial bench at Pacific Sands Resort in Tofino. The plaque on the bench will be redone to include Hanks name.

