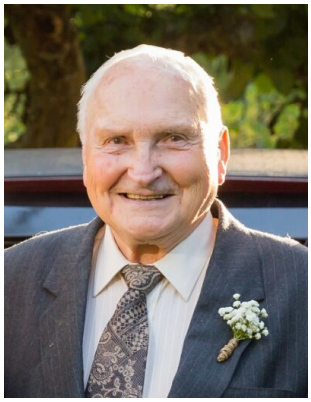

## REMEMBERING

# William Naherniak (Bill)

Bill passed away peacefully at his home on July 2, 2025, surrounded by family. He never expected to reach age 90 and was grateful for the many wonderful years, as well as for his family, friends and caregivers (both during his time in the hospital and his last months at home).

Born in 1934 near Riding Mountain Park in Manitoba, Bill was the youngest in a family of six girls and three boys. His parents, Nastashia (Nettie) and Andrew (Andre) came to Canada from Ukraine as children in 1900. Life on the farm was difficult in the early years, but Bill made the most of things. He bought his first musical instrument, a mandolin, at age 8, and was soon hired to play at local events along with his older brothers Melvin and Alex, who played fiddle and guitar (it was only later that Bill took up the fiddle himself).

At age 14, Bill moved to Pine Falls, Manitoba to live with his sister Olive and her family, where he helped in Olive's restaurant and also with looking after his young niece and nephews. Eventually, Bill went to work for the Abitibi Paper Mill in Pine Falls. He was active in the union, as well as fraternal organizations, the Royal Canadian Engineers militia, and several sports. One of his fondest memories during this time was being the "stick boy" for the Pine Falls Paper Kings Senior Hockey team, which eventually won the Allan Cup. This gave Bill an "in" to later meet many ex-NHL players.

Bill married Joan Zeemel in Winnipeg in 1956. Their three sons, Brian, Mark and Craig were born in Pine Falls. The family moved to Vancouver Island in 1964, where Bill worked at the Crofton Pulp and Paper Mill and was president of the local United Paper Workers Union. He moved on to various business ventures, including co-owning the Ukrainian Village Restaurant and Active Sports sporting goods store. He was a leader in tractor sales at Iron Horse Equipment, which enabled him and Joan to visit cities and factories in other parts of the world. Bill later opened his own farm equipment dealership, Farmers' Choice.

In October 2009, a fall led Bill to a spinal cord injury and a helicopter ride to Vancouver General Hospital. Totally paralyzed, Bill spent five months in rehabilitation at G. F. Strong, after which he surprised and impressed medical staff by leaving as a “walking quadriplegic.” A year later, he was playing the fiddle again (though not with his earlier dexterity).

Bill and Joan lived in several locations in the Cowichan Valley, eventually building a house on 13 acres north of Duncan, where they welcomed friends and family over the years, including grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Bill was predeceased by his beloved wife Joan in 2021. He leaves behind older sisters, Lena and Ann, sons, Brian (Norah), Mark (Elaine) and Craig (Jacquie), grandchildren, Adam, Eric, Drew (Hanna) and Danielle (Gabe), great-grandchildren, Emma, Anna, Lilly, Riley and Emma, and much-loved nieces, nephews, cousins and friends, including many valued friends at the Valley Seniors Activity Centre.

A celebration of Bill’s life will be held at Valley Seniors Activity Centre, 198 Government St. in Duncan, Saturday July 26, 2-4pm.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the local BCSPCA.