Alfred Cornelis Sillem – “Alfred the Flowerman”

It is with deep sadness that we share the passing of Alfred Sillem, known widely in Victoria as Alfred the Flowerman, on March 17, 2023.

Alfred was born in Amsterdam, Netherlands on February 26th, 1946. From an early age Alfred sought out adventure and valued his independence which led him to immigrate to Canada in 1968. Alfred found work as a commercial fisherman and for many years crewed aboard the trawler Ocean King. When he was still in the Netherlands Alfred worked in the gardens of the Dutch Royal Family. When it came time for him to transition out of fishing into something closer to home, it was a natural choice for Alfred to start his own business selling flowers. In 1983 Alfred opened a small shop on the corner of Shelbourne and Feltham called The Flower Man. A confident entrepreneur, Alfred saw an opportunity to sell flowers in the restaurants, bars and clubs of Victoria. Donning his tuxedo and fedora and preparing a large basket of flowers, Alfred The Flowerman was born. Selling flowers was more than a business for Alfred, it was a way of life. Over almost 40 years he developed memorable friendships with patrons, owners, managers and serving staff across Victoria, singing his way from one end of the city to the other, over the course of an evening. Alfred never tried to be someone other than himself and he had a good sense of humour. This genuine approach to life allowed him to appreciate others for their true selves. It was always a joy to see Alfred in the bars for the simple fact that he spread a lot of love and positivity and had an uncanny ability to make people feel special.



One of Alfred’s favourite places to be was his garden where he grew some of the flowers he sold in his bouquets as well as some legendary vegetables. He loved the natural world and was drawn to art that depicted the beauty of the west coast and often supported local painters. Alfred also played field hockey and spoke fondly of his experience travelling to New Zealand to compete with a local Victoria team. His family will also remember him as an avid collector who had eclectic taste in everything from Mickey Mouse memorabilia to hockey cards to stamps and coins.

Alfred was a kind, loving and supportive father who taught his children hard work, loyalty, generosity and openness. Alfred became an important father figure to many youth who found acceptance and safety in the home and family that he and his wife Susan had created. He was a playful grandfather who found great joy in giving gifts and sharing stories with his grandchildren.

Alfred will be deeply missed by his children Nik Sillem (Agnes Sillem), Kris Sillem (Mackenzie Sillem) Dan Berger (Melissa Young) and Janet Aitchison; by grandchildren Marton, Lukas, Sarita, Mowat and Emilie-Sue; and by his sisters Olga and Theadora (Tito).

Alfred is predeceased by his wife Susan. He is also predeceased by his siblings Kathleen, Attie, Peter, Alexander, Gideon,

It is difficult to think of Alfred without imagining him singing. And so, we imagine him singing us this last farewell as he rejoins his beloved Suzie and is guided into the afterlife by the many canine companions he loved.

And now the end is here
And so I face that final curtain
My friend I'll make it clear
I'll state my case, of which I'm certain
I've lived a life that's full
I traveled each and every highway
And more, much more
I did it, I did it my way

-My Way

A celebration of life for family and friends will be shared at a later date.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

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