

# Ron Willems

Ron, born June 27, 1944 at Grace Hospital in Vancouver, BC went home from hospital to Strawberry Hill to be doted upon by his three older sisters. He was raised in Abbotsford on the newly minted family farm on Vye Road. He grew up with his growing family amid the forests, ponds and pastures surrounding the "farm" and completed elementary school at Huntingdon and South Poplar. He attended junior MEI and Abbotsford Senior High where he graduated in 1962. Following grade 13 at Abbotsford Senior High and following family tradition, he enrolled and graduated in 1965 from Bethany Bible College in Hepburn, Saskatchewan with a diploma in pastoral counselling and Christian Education. Not ready to be a church pastor, he enrolled at Simon Fraser University in 1966 at a time when "radical" SFU was undergoing turmoil concerning academic freedom. He married Bonita Joan Dewhurst in December 1965. With Bonnie's dedicated financial and emotional support and in spite of the universities' strikes, he somehow managed to complete the required coursework and graduated with a PSA Degree in 1969. He worked for Cliff Avenue United Church as a youth worker during his years at university in Burnaby. Faced with a plethora of job choices, he attended social worker training in Vancouver and took his first posting to Dawson Creek, BC as a social worker in November of 1969. In 1975 after rapid on the job learning, he was transferred to Victoria as a social work consultant to develop Community Human Resources and Health Centers under Community Resources Board legislation. Following the demise of CRB's, he was transferred to Penticton as a District Supervisor. In 1978, he won a promotion to Victoria as director in a policy division and remained in Victoria for the balance of his 33 year career. His assignments as Director of Strategic Planning, Income Assistance, Adoptions, Labour Market Attachment, negotiator for highways privatization and Staff of the Task Force on Public Private Partnership were

among the highlights of a satisfying and successful career. Following his retirement from the BC Government in 1998, Ron took up home renovations and construction. He ended this enterprise on his wife's retirement but continued until his death building and repairing leaded glass windows.

His son Alan James Willems was born in Victoria in 1975. Bonnie and Ron were divorced in 1983. Ron formed a second relationship with Bert McMahon and after living together for many years, they were married in 2010.

He is predeceased by his mother Hilda and his father Clarence. Ron is survived by his son Alan (Erica) and grandchildren, Mitchell James and Riley Mae. He is survived by all his siblings, Arlene, Gloria, Marilyn, Jim, Rick, Jack and Bonnie. As the middle child, he took ironic pleasure that he finally did something first.

A Celebration of Life will be held in the Sequoia Centre at McCall Gardens, 4665 Falaise Drive, Victoria, BC on Saturday, August 19<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Victoria Hospice in Ron's name.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens

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