

A celebration of Peter's life

Peter Gerhardt Benjamin Wierenga born December 31st1945 in Westlock Alberta, the fourth of 6 children to Herman & Harriett who both had a strong Dutch heritage.

Life was happy and full of joy until at the age of 8 dual tragedy struck. Peter's world irrevocably changed with the sudden death of his father in a tragic car accident, coinciding with Peter contracting polio and being paralysed and placed in hospital isolation for 3 months. His only contact with visitors being from behind a glass window.

After recovery from Polio and adjusting to the realities of a changed family life with his adored older brother Andrew becoming his father figure & mentor at the age of 17 and a half, in the midst of his first year at Uni, tragedy struck again. Peter was devastated at the death of his brother Andrew, sister in law Carolyn & sister Gladys in a car accident a week before Gladys's wedding. This loss had a profound and everlasting effect on Peter's life.

After some unsettled years Peter decided to go on a working holiday with his school friend. Peter travelled to New Zealand, Australia and Indonesia, finally making his way to London in 1972. Penniless & after a bout of malaria, he found work as a barman at Samuel Pepys restaurant on the river Thames in London. A few months later an Aussie girl, Anne, also on a working holiday started as a waitress in the restaurant. Friendship blossomed into love and when Anne announced in October 1973 she was returning to Australia for

Christmas, Peter said she should come to Canada and meet his family. Peter's intention which may not come as a surprise to many here, was to arrive home unannounced and surprise them with an Aussie girlfriend, but Anne insisted he contact his family first. With grace and love, Anne was warmly welcomed by all his Canadian family. When the time came to return to Australia, Peter very romantically proposed with the words "go home and book the church for a March wedding, I'll work here for 3 months to save my airfare".

Peter and Anne married on 30th March 1974 at Scots Uniting church, North Terrace, Adelaide. Peter was lovingly welcomed into Anne's family. In particular, his mother-in-law staunchly supported Peter, and during any and all discussion always sided with Peter to ensure he was not a lone voice, possibly because he was correct, but more likely being fully aware of his sacrifice in leaving his family in Canada.

At that time Australia offered free university and Peter gratefully completed his university degree in education to become a high school teacher. He did contract teaching for a couple of years and in 1979 Peter and Anne proudly welcomed a beautiful son, Todd. Bursting with pride and happiness, Peter shared a cigar with the next door neighbour and the very next day hit a home run playing his beloved baseball.

In 1980 Peter obtained a permanent teaching position in Port Pirie.

the sadness of a miscarriage turned to joy with the birth of their beautiful daughter, Lauren, in 1982 and a little ray of sunshine in the shape of a girl came into their world.

Peter was a proud and devoted husband and father, who fiercely protected and lovingly cared for his family. Realising that Port Pirie was a great place to raise children, they stayed for 10 years and made many lifelong friends, some of whom join us today.

In 1990 Peter transferred to Salisbury East High School and then he finally taught at Norwood Morialta High School. Peter loved teaching and overall we think his students respected and appreciated him.

Peter loved watching and playing sport, especially playing baseball and later golf. He learned to enjoy watching Aussie rules football with his father-in-law, but his love of baseball and ice hockey continued until the end.

At the age of 62 the late effects of Polio, called post-polio syndrome, forced Peter into early retirement and to cease playing golf. He was a strong advocate for Polio SA and held the positions of Treasurer and President.

The disappointment of being unable to play golf anymore, turned to joy when we welcomed Mel, Todd's wife, into our family in 2009 and then our 2 precious grandchildren, Eloise & Evan, who bring so much joy and love into our lives.

Instead weekly whacking at golf balls, every Wednesday became a day of looking after grandchildren, quickly anointed

as Wacky Wednesday. Day trips to museums, train rides and more were the weekly highlight.

Over the years Peter and family were thankful for the many opportunities to visit Canada and his large extended family. The huge distance didn't diminish their love and fun times sharing many celebrations and creating cherished memories. Peter and the family returned to live and work in Canada for 6 months in 1991, also enjoying a road trip across the United States of America. Precious long-lasting connections remain with many family members coming to visit Peter recently. His family was his life and joy.

In 2020, Peter was diagnosed with an aggressive form of Multiple Myeloma, which he fiercely battled. Peter was extremely proud and thankful for the knowledge and skills of his daughter Lauren, a specialist pharmacist, as she lovingly guided him through the medical terminology and his treatments. Our entire family is very grateful for the superb care Peter received from Dr Cindy Lee and all at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

PETER GERHARDT BENJAMIN WIERENGA – A BIG NAME FOR A BIG MAN WITH A BIG HEART WHO HAS LEFT A BIG HOLE IN OUR LIVES. Our love and cherished memories sustain us.