John Keen

APRIL 1, 2016



John Keen, late of Riceton, Saskatchewan, passed away on April 1, 2016 at the Wascana Rehabilitation Center in the Veterans Wing at the age of 85 years surrounded by family.

Predeceased by his wife Alice Forrest in January 2013. He is survived by his four sons Ray (Valentina Fierro), Jack (Heather Pokiak), Dan, Robert (Lucie Baillargeon); his 7 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

Born in Staynor Ontario, he was raised across Canada during the thirties. He enrolled in the armed forces in 1948 and spent time in Korea. After the war, he received a medical discharge and took up farming.

John met Alice at a Valentine’s Day dance in Regina in 1954 and the two were married on June 26 of the same year. He was actively involved in many social movements. Alice was an active partner in all of these activities. His love and respect for her continued despite her being afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease.

He was socially active throughout his life and derived pleasure from helping activists and supporting their causes. The devil’s advocate his favorite personna; John enjoyed defending the unheard. He ran in the federal election of 1993.

His life was one of contradictions and oppositions. Berry-picking in the Qu’Appelle Valley and denouncing the international monetary fund simultaneously. His sense of humour was wielded mercilessly as it removed animosity in a heated conversation or backhanded an unsuspecting adversary with wit.

Special thanks to all of John's caregivers at the Wascana Rehabilitation Center for the exceptional care they provided during the three years he was a resident.

As per John’s wishes there will not be a funeral service. A private family inurnment will take place at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to a charity of the donor’s choice.

Messages of Condolence

Those of us who knew John have lost a great friend. He loved matching wits with anyone, and always held his own. His phone calls were always fun, coming at anytime, with never an introduction, straight into whatever point needed to be made that day. May this next journey be as interesting as the last.

— Ken

So sorry to hear of your Fathers passing my family remembers the years of growing up
with you boys and the fun times we all had. I'm sorry we sort of drifted apart do keep memories close and know we are thinking of you all at this time.
Pearl, Dave, Leona, Kim

— Pearl Harvey (Pomeroy)

I was saddened to hear of John's passing. My Dad, Tom Ellis, who passed away in March of 2014, resided with John at the Wascana Rehab Centre. I so enjoyed John's stories and particularly his quick wit- he used to make me laugh out loud during the Music Therapy sessions.

He was a kind, gracious man and I'm sure that he will be greatly missed. I wish your family comfort in your most cherished memories.

Like you, our family was so grateful to the staff of the Wascana Hospital for their compassionate care. I remember John stating just that during a conversation that I had with him! He felt blessed to be there and often showed his appreciation, usually through teasing and a few winks!

I am thinking of your family during this sad time.

— Joanne Aldcorn

We have lost two great friends and mentors in John and Alice. Our thoughts and encouragement are with their family. John liked to describe himself as a pig farmer from Riceton. He credited Alice as being the genius behind their pig operation. When he lectured to my students some were befuddled at how a pig farmer could tell them anything. Others responded immediately to his warmth and wisdom; they recognised him as a kindred spirit. That is how we will remember him. I came to know John best working on alternative budgets. This was one of his great strengths. When he became fascinated with the multilier effect, how it justified government spending, and how the dominant idea of government as a sink hole for money was in fact a myth and sometimes even a lie, our phones, mine and many, many others in Saskatchewan and across Canada, began ringing regularly. As he launched into the description of his calculations I was invariably soon three equations behind. But he was forgiving and always ready to phone again with further explanations. How John and Alice found their way to a deep understanding of both agricultural production and the workings of the Canadian political economy may be a bit obscure but it can give us all hope and faith in the resilience of human consciousness and for a better future. Thank you John and Alice.

— Bob Stirling

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