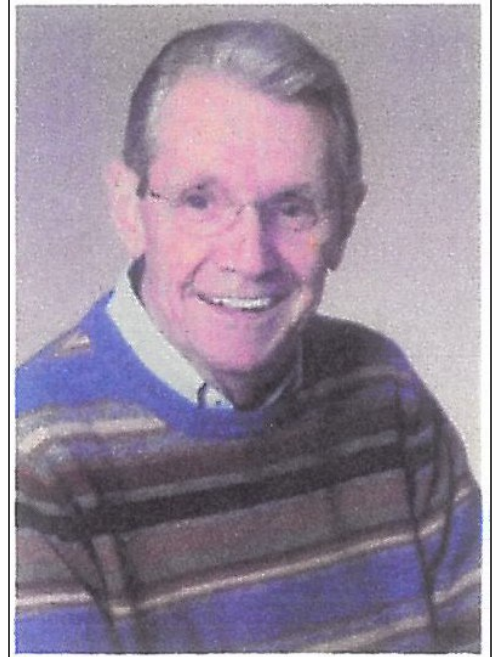


James "Jim/Kiwi" MacDonald

MAY 29, 2018

It is with sad hearts and great sorrow that we announce the passing of James "Jim/Kiwi" Macdonald of Ladner BC, on May 29th at the age of 87. He is survived by his wife Bernice (Bea), stepson John Sumner (Catrin Owen), Louisa Flinn and grandchildren Madelaine, Alexandra, Ben and Emmy.



James was born and raised in New Zealand, emigrating to Vancouver, Canada in time for his 21st birthday. After working for a brief time at the Shell Oil Company he was hired by CHWK Radio station in Chilliwack, writing commercials and playing piano "live" at noon. He worked his way into the news room and eventually became editor. In December of 1956, Canada's worst air disaster turned into the broadcast "scoop" that changed Jim's life forever. In the spring following the winter tragedy, and acting on a tip, Jim (Vancouver CKWX Radio's stringer in the Fraser Valley) broke the story that mountaineer Elfrida Pigou and two companions had found fuselage wreckage on Mt. Slesse near Chilliwack. They got the broadcast story of the year. The next day CKWX hired Jim away from the Fraser Valley, introducing him to big city radio.

He supplemented his broadcasting income by playing piano at the Smilin' Buddha Cabaret, where he met beautiful Bernice Ortwein—for the first time. She was the love of his life—he just didn't know it at the time.

After a storied career in radio as crime beat and city hall reporter, Jim became a talk show host and interviewer known for his ability to use the pregnant pause to get his guests to open up. From radio he became a well-known face on Channel 8 (black and white) television.

Jim later returned to Chilliwack and the cabaret world as co-founder of the Answer Cabaret with his partner and fellow bon vivant, Bill Wosk. When the cabaret sold, Jim became a food and beverage executive with the Harrison Hot Springs Hotel for 14 years. Later, he was the manager of the Lougheed Hotel in Vancouver, and the hotel owners sent him to his homeland down under to conduct business in Auckland and Wanganui. After over a year in New Zealand, he returned to Vancouver to open downtown's Suites at Conference Plaza. At this time, serendipity smiled on Jim once more and he and Bea met again at a funeral for a mutual friend. Thirty years since their last meeting, the flame was still alight, at in 2000, eager not to make the same mistake twice, Jim and Bea began a life together. They have lived lovingly and harmoniously for 18 blissful years in South Pointe, Ladner BC.

Kiwi—a brilliant raconteur, a gentleman with the kindest heart, and a faithful friend to so many, will be much missed and remembered with love and laughter. Until we meet again, we expect you to be telling jokes and tickling the ivories in that most glamorous of cabaret venues. Good night, sweet Prince.

You are invited to leave a personal message of condolence for the family.

Messages of Condolence

I was a Vancouver Sun news reporter then Sportswriter for 11 years and Jim MacDonald was an ace reporter with Radio CKWX. We both met during the PNE annual Fairs of the 1960s--Ed Moyer, the PNE's PR man, liked to hire working media folks as Fair time assistants to either write, or send voice reports, to daily/weekly newspapers, and radio outlets, throughout BC, especially with results from the top-ranked PNE agricultural and horse shows. Jim and I were both very competitive and did our best to daily scoop one another...until Boss Ed told us to lighten up and work together. That's when I found Jimmy to be a warm, considerate and multi-talented guy. We had an open invitation to have drinks and dinner in the fair time PNE Directors' lounge and finally attended. Jimmy spotted a piano during this sedate get-together and said, "watch this." He strode to the piano then boldly called for everyone's attention and said he would take requests--provided those who knew the words would follow along. Within minutes this skilled musician had the entire room singing. Our Jimmy as a noteworthy reporter and consummate musician? A tossup--as it should be. Jim and I were in touch sporadically over the years, and so it is that I sincerely thank Bernice, his loving wife, for enabling these on-line memories of the man she called her "Sweet Prince." That he was.

Cheers, Jim, and God Bless! Jack Lee: VanSun writer 1955-66 and, thanks to my earlier Fair time introduction with Jimmy MacDonald, PNE PR Manager 1969-78.

— **Jack Lee**

Bea, sending you my love. I am so sorry about Jim, he was such a special man. I am so glad he found you again, you were his everything. Love to you and the family

— **Linda Carey**



<https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/macdonald-james-jim-kiwi>

Printed on June 3, 2026