Bernhard Peters



JULY 28, 2011

LIFE STORY

Bernhard “Bernie” Peters

Dad was born on January 11, 1938 in Blumengart, Ukraine to Peter & Margarete Peters. He was the youngest of nine children. Dad had a happy childhood, although there were many difficult times as a result of the Second World War. When he was five years old, the family escaped from Russia with the retreating German army. As the war continued, they fled from one German village to another. When they came to Gronau, the Mennonite Central Committee assisted the refugee families, providing them with a church to attend, with preachers and Sunday School teachers, clothes, food, & other basic needs. Everyone was thankful for the help they received from the MCC. After the war, he enjoyed playing soccer and his favourite subject in school was math. Throughout his life he seldom used a calculator. At school, he could often answer the math question in his head before his classmates could do it on paper.

In 1948, Dad’s brothers, John & Hank and one sister, Jutta, immigrated to Canada. Later another sister, Margaret, and her husband, followed them. Dad, along with his parents and older sister, Kathea, applied several times to immigrate to Canada. However, because his father was in poor health, their application was denied. In 1953, a few weeks before his father became seriously ill and passed away, their church choir often sang the song, "Must I Go And Empty Handed?" It saddened Dad’s father to think that he would soon meet Jesus, and yet, he could

not think of a soul that he had led to the Lord. When Dad heard that, he decided that he wanted to accept Jesus as his personal Saviour and promised the Lord that he himself would not come to heaven empty-handed. Later, Dad realized that his father's prayer had been answered; his testimony had brought Dad to salvation.

Once Dad completed grade 8, he began an apprenticeship making furniture at a local shop. Approximately seven months after his father's death, Dad's mother again applied to come to Canada. This time their application was granted. At the age of 15, Dad, his mother, and his sister Kathea came to Winnipeg, where he lived with his brother and sister-in-law, Hank & Lucia. He went to English school for six months and during that time worked at a bowling alley, setting up pins.

From there, Dad went to Saskatchewan to live with his sister, Jutta, and her family. He worked on their farm for two years and for another local farmer the following year. After two serious farm accidents that resulted in the loss of his thumb and a broken back, Dad decided to come to Vancouver where his mother and sister Margaret lived. He found a job in the plywood division of MacMillan Bloedel, where he worked for 28 years. In 1957, he was baptized upon the confession of his faith, and became a member of the First United Mennonite Church. He enjoyed singing in the choir and participating in youth activities.

Dad was good at managing money and was only 21 years old when he purchased his first house and car.

In 1960, he met mom at a Valentine's party. She immediately became very special to him, and they were married a year and a half later, in July of 1961. The following year, he transferred his church membership to Pacific Grace Mission Chapel where he taught Sunday School for thirteen years. Here, both Dad and Mom experienced significant spiritual growth. They formed many life-long friendships.

In 1964, their family grew with the birth of Tammy. Randy followed in 1966. In February, 1968, Dad built a house for us and the family moved to Ladner. In May of 1976, Dad and Mom transferred their membership to the Richmond Bethel Church which was closer to where we lived. Here too, they grew in their Christian walk with God. Dad was the spiritual leader of our family. Devotions and prayer were very important. He led Randy to the Lord and was very instrumental in Tammy's Christian walk as well. At church, he was privileged to serve on the Board of Worship and was Head Usher for a number of years.

Together, our family enjoyed special times, such as camping around the northwest, traveling to Disneyland and Winnipeg, playing outside, going on mystery tours, attending community events and playing board games. We enjoyed birthdays, Christmases, and many other family events. Dad's passion for sports obvious from his loud, full-bodied cheering while watching what he loved best: soccer, football, and hockey. Whether on TV or at the many games he took us to, his enthusiasm was clear to all. Dad really enjoyed his time coaching Randy's soccer team for three years.

In 1984, MacMillan Bloedel closed the mill. It was a difficult time for Dad as he looked for another job, but eventually he found work as a custodian with the Delta School District. He was employed there for eight years until he experienced a back injury. This resulted in chronic pain that eventually forced his retirement.

In 1986, the family grew again with Tammy's marriage to Harry Harms, and in 1991, when Randy married Lois Janzen.

In the following years, Dad and Mom enjoyed looking after their grandchildren. Dad felt blessed to have the little ones nearby and loved seeing them grow up. Dad and Mom cared for all seven grandchildren while we worked. They spent many happy hours together as they played with them, helped them learn their Bible verses and drove them to the various programs they attended. Every

summer, all the grandchildren stayed with their Grandpa and Grandma for a week. They went on daily excursions to local parks, beaches and other attractions. They made every day special; and that week was the highlight of their summer.

Dad and Mom loved travelling. Among other trips, they took a number of vacations to Hawaii, the prairies, the Oregon Coast, Arizona and to Germany, where Dad showed Mom where he grew up.

In August 2003, Dad had the joy of leading his brother, John to the Lord in the months before he passed away. In July 2007, he was also instrumental in leading his brother, Hank to faith in Christ before Hank's death three days later.

Although Dad sometimes struggled with why the Lord would allow him to have so much pain, he continued to trust God and strived to please Him. He often wished he could serve Him more. Dad had a consistent prayer life, and truly loved God. He spent much time studying his Bible and comparing different translations and maps, and reading other Christian books to understand the Bible better. Despite his continuous suffering, Dad never blamed God, but instead, frequently prayed, "God, may You be glorified through this."

Almost three years ago, Dad suffered a serious stroke, followed a few hours later by full cardiac arrest, where his heart stopped for 11 minutes. He was hospitalized for five months and then came home to live for one year. The results of the stroke were life-changing for both Dad and Mom and presented great challenges, but God gave them strength and grace to carry on. As his condition deteriorated, it became apparent that Dad needed more specialized assistance. We are very thankful to all those who lovingly cared for him at Delta View, Northcrest and Mountain View care centers.

We praise God that over the past few months, Dad's condition improved, and we were able to have many great conversations with him. What a gift that was! It was very special to be able to celebrate Dad and Mom's long-awaited 50th Wedding Anniversary on July 1st of this year with him able to fully enjoy the festivities.

On Monday, July 25th, Dad suffered a second critical stroke. After breakfast, he went to sleep and awoke on Thursday, July 28th in the arms of Jesus. We, as a family, are thankful to God that He has relieved Dad of his pain and suffering, and that his body is now whole and perfect.

Dad is predeceased by his parents, Peter and Margarete; his brothers Peter, John and Hank, and his sisters, Jutta, Margaret, Elizabeth and Kathea. He is mourned by his wife, Sally, his children, Tammy & (Harry) Harms from Delta, B.C., Randy & (Lois) Peters from Cloverdale, B.C., seven grandchildren, Ashley, Joshua, Nathan and Lukas Harms, and Sydney, Tristan and Olivia Peters; one sister, Maria Fischer, from Germany; and a sister-in-law, Mary Peters, from Winnipeg.

Though Dad is no longer with us, he has a left us a lasting legacy.

We will forever remember the responsibility he took upon himself to model for us how to work hard, study well, value family and to love unconditionally. And as it says in Romans 5, how to "rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint."

Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into your rest.

A celebration of life will be held on Wed., Aug. 3 at 11 AM at the Richmond Bethel Church with Pastor Harry Heidebrecht officiating.

Memorial Gifts in memory of Bernie Peters may be designated for: Mennonite Central Committee.

Messages of Condolence

Papa,
We all miss you so terribly much. You have become so much more than a father to me the last few years. You have become a very dear friend, mentor and advisor and not having you here will leave a very big void in my life. But we have the assurance that this is only for a short time. I cannot wait to wrap my arms around you again and have you take me on a tour of Heaven. In the meantime, I will take good care of Mom and together we will look forward to the day we are together again. Thank you for all the love you have shown me and all the things you have taught me. How could anyone ever ask more out of a father? I miss you and I will always love you. Forever your little boy, Randy

— Randy Peters

Dad,

I will be forever grateful for the loving father that you were. I always felt utterly cared for. You taught us the value of many things: our extended family, our possessions that God gave us and our spouses. The example of your love and consideration for Mom will be with us always. You were such a team! We will miss you dearly, but the life lessons we learned from you will influence our every step. Thank you for your gift of self. I can't wait for that big hug in heaven!

Forever your little girl,

Tammy

— Tammy Harms

My dearest Bernie,

First I want to tell you that I am incredibly happy that you are now in heaven with the Lord. Words cannot express how important that is to me. No more pain, suffering, strokes, heart problems, and the list goes on. I would not want you back only to suffer some more. You are healthy, vibrant and full of life. I thank God!

At the same time, my heart is heavy when I think that I cannot come to you each day. It has been a very difficult road for us to walk. I will miss you so very much. My heart just breaks to think of life without you. Thank you for your faithfulness to me and for your undying love.

Bernie, it has been an honor to be your wife. I feel privileged to have shared my life with you as your soulmate. It was a joy to be a care giver to you. I looked forward to seeing you each day.

Darling, each day following your cardiac arrest has been a "Gold Nugget" for me and I thank God for that extra time that I could spend with you.

Joy comes in the morning.
Until we meet again,
Your loving wife, Sally

— Sally Peters

It's been a long journey but Bernie is now singing and dancing with the angels. You are in our prayers. See you tomorrow. Love & prayers. Bill & Kay

— Bill & Kay Rempel

Dear family: Just to let you know how special Bernie and Sally were to Tony and me and now to Sam and myself. I have many fond memories of time spent with Sally and Bernie. We used to laugh and laugh especially a story I remember very well when we called friends of ours who had moved away. Bernie stole the show that afternoon but for details, you will have to ask your Mom. Bernie was a true and faithful friend who LOVED God, Sally, his family, and his friends and in that order. Time spent together at Pacific Grace Chapel and weekend outings were so very very special.

Love and Prayers, Evie

— Evie Loewen Taetz

Dear Sally and family:

Our hearts go out to you at this most difficult time. Bernie, Dad and Grampa was and always will be so very precious to you. He will be sorely missed but we all know he is in the arms of Jesus. Take comfort and know that you will always be in our prayers. We love you all so much and God will take care of you.

Love and Prayers, Sam and Evie

— Evie Loewen Taetz

Bernie, we have so enjoyed being your neighbour friends. We enjoyed watching you and Sally working on the garden and your love for each other was evident. We will miss you but understand that you are walking with the angels pain free. We know you will be looking down on us and smiling that Bernie smile. We miss our meetings in the park and Kaida misses the way you tirelessly tossed the ball for her. Rest in peace dear friend, until we meet again.
Love,
Hilton, Karen & Kaida

— Hilton & Karen Kate

Dear Sally, Tammy, Randy, and your families,

We have sent our card and gift already, but we want you to know how much we would like to be at the Memorial Service for Bernie tomorrow! Thank you for blessing us with those letters you wrote to Bernie!
We will keep in touch, and are continuing to pray for you!

Henry & Agnes Petkau

— Henry & Agnes Petkau

Dear Sally & family!

Bernie is finally at home with Jesus. No more pain.
Our thoughts and prayers are with you all.
Love,
Rudy & Kay Voth

— Rudy & Kay Voth

Dear Uncle Bernie, being your niece was a priviledge and a joy. Thank you for loving me and teasing me, for the piggy back rides on your cast and the warm embrace when I really needed one. Although your time with us was cut short, you will always be in my heart and the memories will be forever.
Your loving niece Trudy

— Trudy Close

Since hearing of Bernie's passing, I have spent some time thinking of the memories I have of him. I want to share one special memory which has shown me what an amazing man of God Bernie has been.

Some years ago, when I was still single, I was greatly impacted by a Christian book that I was reading at the time. While Bernie was always up for a lively discussion and critique of what I might be "into" at any time, he was intrigued enough and cared enough about me to read this book himself. What ensued were some wonderful times of sharing in which Bernie would be in tears, longing for the things of God and in wonder at being the object of God's love. His sensitivity and passion showed me what an lovely relationship he had with God and how dearly he valued what God had done in his life.

— Linda Danielson

Sally, Tammy & Randy: Your love for your husband and father was so very evident in your interactions with him, as was his love for you. One of my favourite memories of Bernie was seeing him at Mountain View park near his home, surrounded with his small grandchildren, having a picnic (of course Sally was there too.) He radiated joy and pride in his grandchildren. The spiritual model he presented both to his children and grandchildren will be a legacy to his family for many generations. Grace and peace, Barbara A.

— Barbara Armstrong

Reading Mr. Peter's (he will always be Mr. Peter's to us) life story has been inspiring. Even though we knew him best when he had his pain, it never seemed to characterize who he was. His passion and love for his grandchildren always pleasantly surprised us. What a wonderful legacy that your family has to draw from for comfort. Blessings to you!
Love Chris and Gwen Petkau

— Chris and Gwen Petkau

Dear Mrs. Peters, Tammy and family, I was sorry to hear of the passing of Mr. Peters. You are in my thoughts.
Joan Skosnik

— Joan

Sally, My prayers and thoughts are with you and your family during this difficult time. I met Bernie and yourself when Bernie was at Northcrest Care Centre. I know how much you will miss him but I also know that you will take comfort in knowing that he is no longer suffering and that he is in heaven and that you see him again.
With love,
Laura Todd

— Laura Todd

Dear Sally, Tammy and Randy, please accept our deepest sympathy on the loss of your dear husband and dad. Rest in peace in the arms of the lord Bernie. We remember you well. god bless you Sally Tammy and Randy. Edie and Barrie Mccallum and family.

— Barrie and Edie Mccallum

One of my best memories of my Grandpa, was one of my last memories of him. Me and my dad were at the hospital visiting him. I found a little foam ball in the corner of his room. We started tossing it around. We had some good laughs then. Playing catch with my family is never going to be the same.

— Tristan Peters

Dear Tammy and your family,
What sad news to lose your dad and grandpa, Bernie. It has been a challenging few years for you. I really appreciated reading your dad's story on this page. I feel as if I know him, as well as your family a little better. May every day continue to give you all strength to move forward step by step. You will be in my thoughts and prayers for a summer that brings warmth and glowing sunshine into your family life.

— Dorothy Hobbs

Mrs. Peters, Tammy & Randy (and families)-
I was so saddened to hear of Mr. Peters' passing and read his obit with sadness and a flood of happy memories of shared experiences in Ladner. Funny that I don't recall he had no thumb; that's surely something a kid would have noticed but it is nowhere in my memory. I suspect that's due in large measure to the hearty laughter that was always around! Attending Sunday School at Richmond Bethel is one of my earliest memories; thanks to your family, there was some exposure! Best wishes and sincerest condolences from your old neighbour. My thoughts and prayers are with you all.

— Denise (Vanderwood) Fallis

Randy and family,

I never met your dad, but through Randy\'s emails and our conversations I feel like he is a friend and I feel the loss of that unmet friend as much as if he were a member of my own family. Through your words I learned of a good man, a man who held his family dear and a man who loved Jesus and brought others to Jesus through his life, his love and the family he loved so much. Even in his last few years while he was ill his life was a testimony to the Lord.

What a blessing to know that your dad is now with Jesus and free from everything that shackled him in this life. You will meet your dad again and when Jesus calls me home I hope to meet him as well.

I am and will be praying for you and your family. Thank you for sharing your dad with me.

— Rob Gray

To Sally and family: We so enjoyed the service for Bernie and it was nice to hear the grandchildren talk about their memories of him.

The one memory that stands out about Bernie is when we belonged to a bible study group and we were all at Anne and John Flaming's and Anne was playing the piano and we were all singing, and I looked over at Bernie as he was in quite a bit of pain that night and he had such a wonderful smile on his face as we were singing about the Lord. Now he is with Him, what a wonderful time for Bernie.

Sincerely, Susie and Bob Williamson, Richmond, BC

— Susie and Bob Williamson

Randy & Family,

I was priveleged to meet Bernie one time when our families met up on the Oregon coast several summers ago. I remember him being a gentle kind man in the limited time we spent together. What an amazing legacy follows him today. You are all examples of his work here on earth as he consistently pointed you all toward heaven. I've been touched by reading the tributes you have posted. He has affected so many lives - likely ones you may never know! His father's prayer was definitely answered - you all are living examples of the answers to that prayer.

What a legacy. My prayers go with you during this mourning time.

— Mike Rohlinger

