Norman George Stitilis

AUGUST 31, 2021



With great sadness, we announce the passing of our dearly loved husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, and friend to many. Norm passed after a long battle with Cancer, ending with a day in the Mission BC hospital with his daughter Cory O'Brien, son Steve Stitilis, and his wife of nearly 60 years, Loretto able to be by his side. The only words he spoke that last day were after stretching his arms out to Loretto for a hug. They embraced, kissed twice (the first kiss wasn't long enough) and as he held her, he said "I love you." He settled into peace and passed away comfortably a couple hours later with Loretto holding his hand.

Norm was born in 1941 at Royal Columbian Hospital to George and Audrey (Greenland) Stitilis. George born in Vilnius, Lithuania, and Audrey in Wetaskiwin, Alberta (her parents Finnish), started Norm's life in a farm in Pitt Meadows, at the end of Ford Road and ending at the Pitt River Dyke. At 6 years old, they moved to the only farm, 3 ½ acres, amongst residential homes on 14th Avenue around Britton and 15th Street in South Burnaby. They had chickens, a cow, and sometimes a pig, and would sell eggs and milk to the neighbours. Here is where Norm would enjoy most of his youth, with his sister Doreen (Bennett), who was 2 years younger, and his dog Mickey. He would often be in the bush with Mickey and his slingshot. At about 15 years old, they moved to a house on 16th Avenue.

He would end up going to Stride Avenue Elementary, Edmonds Junior High School, New West Secondary School and Pearson Highschool. He started carving wood in the woodshed of the farm on 14th Avenue. His dad taught him to carve a whistle. He also taught him how to fix his belongings that he broke. He made some money by skinning the branches of the Cascara bark and drying it out. He could make money by selling it to B&K on Front Street by a 40 or 50 lb bag. Medicine would be made from it. His first job was setting pins at the Royal City Bowling Alley on Columbia Street, under the King Ed Pub. He could make 5 cents a game per person. It took an hour or two to make 50 cents when a league was playing! At 18 he started managing the bowling alley, and that is where he met Loretto. She was 16, messing up his lovely polished alleys by lobbing the bowling ball high in the air and crashing to the lane. It was a necessity to teach her how to bowl. After that initial meeting, they would see each other within gatherings of mutual friends. Norm started Longshoring in New Westminster at 18 years of age. The money to come in was more promising than a job as an electrician, for which he would need more schooling.

Norm enjoyed fast cars and music and was always tinkering on his cars trying to get more power from them. His first car was a 1948 Pontiac. His best friend Maurice Gaucher and himself had the best record collection between them and always had the best dance parties. One of his favorite places to go was The Dunsmuir Pub in New Westminster. However, it was also Frank's in Vancouver. "This is where Loretto and I were starry eyed together dancing to a jukebox."

December 30, 1961, at 20 years old, Norm married Loretto. They moved to a house that Norm had bought before they were married with the help of Norm's dad. He had loaned him the $1000 down payment for the $65,000 house. Loretto was 18 and Norm was 20. By the time Norm was 23 he had 3 children. Cory, Steve and Tina. They lived in an 850 square foot house with a basement on Graham Avenue in Burnaby, across from a park.

Norm and Loretto had their struggles being children still themselves and raising a family. However, Norm's main focus was to make money to support his family, which he did well. He was a big kid growing up with his own kids. He would provide them with all the fun and items that he didn't have growing up. The neighbourhood kids envied him as a father. He was the very best there ever was!

In 1969, at 28 years of age, the family moved to 820 Edgar in Coquitlam. Here he and Loretto provided the family with a wonderful life. Norm started building a 26-foot Cabin Cruiser boat in the backyard, with the plans by designer Frank Carius. The boat was launched in 8 years later, and a foot longer than anticipated…27 feet! Norm loved building that boat, and on the water for a couple years with it!

His daughter Tina had a car accident on her 16th birthday, which left Tina in a coma for 13 months. The family was devastated. Life had changed from fun to serious. Norm and Loretto took Tina home to care for her after 8 months after the injury, …being one of the 1st people in Canada to take home someone in a coma and start to "pattern" them for recovery. There were over 100 volunteers coming to the house weekly for 3 sessions a day of patterning exercises. Norm extended the house and built all the machinery required to help with his daughter's recovery. They kept Tina at home for 11 years until a home was built for brain injured individuals. He and Loretto would continue to be involved in a big way, advocating for those kids. Tina recently passed in December 2018. She had a great life, under the circumstances of her being brain injured, due to the love of her parents.

While Tina was in the care of a home, Norm and Loretto were able to travel a bit. They went to Mexico, across the United States, and across Canada in their travel trailer. Many great memories came with the trips. They travelled to Hawaii, and several cruises. They would cruise through Panama and had numerous vacations to Europe. They managed to get away for 2 months and take the entire family in

1975 to England and Ireland and meet all of Loretto's family.

Norm never was one to sit still and was always busy doing something. Maybe it was in the garage tinkering on a car, making wine or canning, fixing something, renovating the house, building a boat, or fixing one of his rental properties that he owned. He was always doing something. At one point he owned 4 houses.

A few years after his 9-year-old grandson Richard Gronning was killed while on his skateboard by a car in 1998, he moved to the cottage that he and Loretto owned and which they had many memorable family outings in the past summers. He renovated that cottage to be their retirement home and lived in it to his last day. It is a beautiful waterfront on Hatzic Lake with a large grass lawn at the front to the lake.

Norm settled into retirement there with Loretto and kept active every day, up until the last year of his life. His entire life since his late 20's he had always exercised at a gym. In his 70's he was still going to the gym a few times a week, active in the Archery Club, and an active player in Curling. He even taught curling to the high school kids in Mission, which he found so much enjoyment. He had a love of astronomy and had a telescope and magazine subscription to help with his interest. He always loved woodworking and had many projects. He carved a life-sized carousel for Loretto. His whole life, dad was a natural born teacher, with amazing patience. He had a young zest for learning so many things. He was always happy with teaching what he knew through his experiences and expertise.

All that met Norm have said that he never had a mean bone in his body. He was a handsome, kind, and gentle man. He was never one to hold a grudge. He was always happy, and quick to smile. A man that was a good friend, loved his family, appreciated life and what it offered, and was always there to do what he could do for his family. He will be so deeply missed by so many. We are who we are, because of who he was.

Messages of Condolence

Dear Family of Norm Stitilis;
My sincere and deepest condolences on your loss of Norm, May he RIP. Norm was a dear friend dating back to our high school at LPHS. He was also a good friend of my late brother Garry when they long shored together on the docks. He is sure gonna be missed by all who new him. Once again RIP buddy

— Ronald Gidora

Dear Loretto,
We are sending condolences to you and your family on the loss of Norm. We will miss his smiling face and quiet good humour at the Mission curling rink both on and off the ice. It was a pleasure knowing him and calling him our friend.
Deepest Sympathy,
Vicki and Laurie Stretch

— Laurie and Vicki Stretch

I am so sorry for your loss Auntie Loretto cousins Cory and Steve. He was a great man. My last visit with him he talked about fishing ...I know he is fishing with Jim and Dad as they teach Richard the fine art...
I can't count how many times your dad asked me to help him with things when Jim passed....it helped me so much those first few months...Nevermind how sick he was, he was concerned with mine...the world has truly lost a great man...mom keeps telling me stories about their growing up years...we loved him dearly. If you ever need anything never hesitate to call...sending loving hugs

— Deb Tait

We’re so sorry for your loss.

Mr. Norm will be missed by our kids who would visit him while up at the lake each summer.

They loved swinging on his swings and bars and the little chats and smiles along the way.

— Sherri Tielmann

Dear Loretto,

We are so sorry to hear of Norm's passing.

We will miss his pleasant, good natured friendship.

Bob and Carole steger.

— ROBERT STEGER

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https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/stitilis-norman-george

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