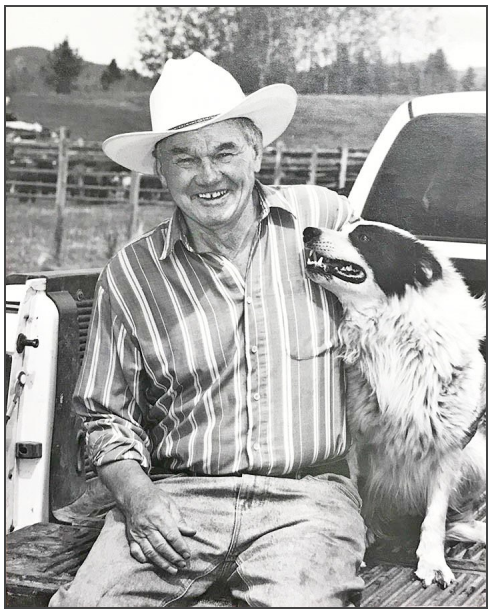
Horst Oscar Wirsig

JANUARY 7, 2021



Horst Wirsig

Died peacefully in Calgary Thursday, 7 January, 2021. His beloved wife Joan predeceased him in 2016. Horst, was born 27 March, 1926 in Niederlangenau, Germany, was part of a large family now extending over several provinces, the United States, and Germany. His life adventures are many. Upon coming to Canada as a young child, he left an advanced education system to live in a small cabin where proper roads were as rare as the vehicles that used them. Rather than learning philosophy and art and science, he learned to hunt, fish, trap, plant, protect and harvest edible food, to raise livestock, to maintain and repair the few farming implements they could afford, to cut and mill timber — and to do so many other things we take for granted today.

Horst always chose industry, initiative and team building as his persuasions to the world. As others of his generation, he believed in positive action over shiny words. Things he accomplished, particularly in a certain, deeply independent kind of entrepreneurship are extraordinary — helping build from scratch a much needed, successful, and productive sawmill with an exemplary safety record, moving next to ranching in the Rocky Mountains where the wilderness stretched literally as far as the eye could see. And there were creative partnerships with like-minded men as they brought to the market many agricultural innovations. He was a pioneer many times over.

In later years, his character truly shone through when his wife was permanently hospitalized. Everyone at St. Martha’s Place (part of Mineral Springs Hospital in Banff) knew Horst. On an almost daily basis for 12 years he visited, spending hours with Joan while becoming an unofficial occupational therapist to her and her community there. Every afternoon he made tea for all the residents — using his own tea cups and kettle! The residents, the staff — all were entertained by the many special-occasion signs he created and displayed so they could be seen both outside and inside the large glass windows of St. Martha’s. Signs not only for the big holidays, but also for times like Chinese New Years, Valentine’s, Mother’s Day, Canada Day, and others — they were all cycled in for the appropriate occasion and everyone looked forward to the next one.

Horst’s love of growing things never ended, and his taste for a quiet scotch always remained. No summer was complete without geraniums on the steps and a few carefully protected tomato plants against the side of his house. And no warm gathering was complete without that sip of scotch!
There may be thoughts of writing or sending tributes, but this spring, why not also plant a geranium or a tomato plant in Horst’s honour! And if you are so inclined, raise a glass of scotch to him this coming March 27th — which would have been his 95th birthday. He’d be pleased.

Messages of Condolence

Our condolences to all of Horst's family. I have many fond memories of times spent in the Wirsig home at the Bar C Ranch. Horst always brimmed with enthusiasm and passion with the things he was involved in. He was an amazing person.

the Hill family (Cal, Judy and Ray)

— Cal Hill

It was my privilege and pleasure to have regular contact with Horst and Joan while serving as spiritual care coordinator at Mineral Springs Hospital from 2011-2015. Tea, conversation, sharing our thoughts on the state of the world, and much more were part of the frequent chats I had with Horst. I was blessed in knowing him. Prayers and condolences to Erlene and family.

— Dave Crawford

Erlene & Kirk ... I just saw Horst's obituary in the Cochrane paper and wanted to send my deepest condolences. Like Cal Hill, I have many fond memories of the Wirsig family and the Bar C Ranch and, upon seeing Horst's wonderful gap-toothed smile in the photo, they all came flooding back. Those times are so very long ago now, but I wanted you to know that I hold them dear. I will be keeping you and your families in my thoughts and prayers. Love, Leslie

— Leslie Davies

Dear family and friends of Hurst: Please accept my sincere condolences.
Although I never knew Horst, after reading his amazing obituary in the RMO , I wish I had . His character, convictions , pioneering entrepreneurship, dedication, personality and loving care for his family, friends and environment are captured in your tribute. Indeed, as noted, as others of his generation, my parents shared similar qualities with Horst. So, this spring when I plant my geraniums and tomatoes and think of my own parents, I will also include Horst in my prayers. And I'll raise my glass of scotch on March 27 to him. May many fond memories bring you comfort during this difficult time of loss.
Sincerely & respectfully,

— Carol Poland

Hello. My mom, Joyce, lived at St Martha's for several years and the bright spot in my daily visits was enjoying Horst's sparkling eyes and kind smile and his obvious love and care for his wife and the other residents and families there. We enjoyed too the stories of his adventuresome life, and will indeed grow a geranium and a tomato plant in his memory this summer. A good man and an inspiration to all.

— Ann Morrow

My maiden name is Wirsig & I am saddened to think that a possible relative of mine has passed away. I read the obituary of Horst Wirsig with great interest and would like to share Wirsig family history with any family member who might be interested.
I live in New York state and have many photos of my great-great grandparents.
All the very best to you all & I'll share that glass of scotch on the 27th!
-Terrill

— Terrill Wirsig McDade

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https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/wirsig-horst-oscar

Printed on October 5, 2026