



Rodney P. Burwell

March 29, 2015

Burwell, Rodney Palmer Age 76, of Orono, MN passed away on March 29, 2015, after a lengthy battle with multiple health issues. Rod's life was a testament of his Christian faith and he crossed Heaven's threshold on Palm Sunday, surrounded by his family. Rod was born in Minneapolis on New Year's Day, 1939. His father was a traveling salesman and his family moved frequently during his childhood. Spending most of his time growing up in the Dakotas, Rod learned to value people and the importance of building strong relationships. He was known for his strong work ethic, patience, and discipline. He valued honesty, integrity, loyalty and humility. Rod graduated from the University of North Dakota with a dual degree in industrial engineering and business administration. While a student at UND and a member of Sigma Nu fraternity, he started a janitorial service as a means of paying for his education. His business profited and upon graduation, he sold it to his professor, thus beginning a successful entrepreneurial career. Rod served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from 1961 to 1967, first as a company commander in Germany and later as a captain in Vietnam where he was awarded the Bronze Star. Between his overseas assignments, Rod taught in the ROTC program at Purdue University and coached Purdue's Rifle Team to the Big Ten Championship in 1966. After the military, Rod became a partner in his father's janitorial business in Minneapolis, and became the general manager of a local structural plastics firm. In 1969, Rod founded Proform Inc., and created the fiberglass reinforced plastic barge cover, an

invention that revolutionized the inland river barge industry. As Chairman of Burwell Enterprises Inc., Rod was a master at creating thriving businesses, often by reviving underperforming businesses. Rod was committed to community organizations and served on the boards of multiple local and national charities where he shared his time, talents and experience. With a strong commitment to education, Rod served on the Board of Trustees for; the University of St. Thomas, was a charter member at the University of St. Thomas School of Law, board chair of Augsburg College, president of the University of North Dakota Alumni Foundation, trustee of Opus College of Business and The Blake School. He was the Board Chair for Fairview Health Services, and Fairview Southdale Hospital. Rod was an active leader in Young Presidents Organization, World Presidents, and Chief Executive Organization. He also served as the 1986 Minneapolis Aquatennial Commodore and was a member of the Admirals organization for 29 years. In addition Rod served on corporate boards of TCF Financial, AmeriPrise Certificate Company, RiverSource Life Insurance Company, and Opus Corporation. Rod was actively involved at Wayzata Community Church, the Snowmass Village Chapel in Colorado and as an Elder at Christ Presbyterian Church in Edina. Although never sought, Rod received many accolades for his professional accomplishments and community service, including: the Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service, the John F. Cade Award from the Morrison Center for Entrepreneurship at the University of St. Thomas, the National River Hall of Fame Achievement Award, the University of Minnesota Award of Distinction, the University of North Dakota Sioux Award for Outstanding Career Achievement and Distinguished Public Service, and he was inducted into the Minnesota Business Hall of Fame in 2013. Rod loved the mountains, sky and sea. He was an avid pilot and loved spending time on his boat, downhill skiing, fishing, hunting, golfing, scuba diving and the opera. Ever the adventurer, Rod visited all seven continents. Rod also knew personal tragedy and suffering. After 19 years of marriage, in 1980, he lost his first family when his wife Ara, daughter Araline (age 17), and son David (age 13), were killed,

along with four other friends, in a tragic plane crash. In recent years, he endured multiple illnesses with a sense of grace and courage. In joy and in sorrow, whatever his circumstances, Rod was sustained by his deep faith and trust in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, which he never hesitated to share with others. Rod met his wife Barbara Peterson, a former Miss USA, at a church Bible study. They married Valentine's Day in 1982, and have three sons: Peter, Blake, and Michael. During their 33 years of marriage, Rod cherished his family and delighted in the lives and activities of his sons. He is survived by his family, two brothers Bill and John, Darlene "Didi" Kimpling, and extended family and friends. Rod and his family are grateful for the many friends who supported them during times of significant illness and personal loss. Rod is also preceded in death by his parents, Rodney H. and Fern Louise Burwell. Visitation: 4-7 pm, Thursday, April 9. Funeral Service: 2:00 pm, Friday, April 10. Both gatherings at Christ Presbyterian Church, 6901 Norman-dale Rd., Edina, MN 55435. Private interment. In lieu of flowers, memorials preferred to the Rodney Burwell Memorial Fund for scholarships c/o The Rodney and Barbara Burwell Family Foundation. 8500 Normandale Lake Blvd., Suite 1750, Bloomington, MN 55437. www.Washburn-McReavy.com Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

Tribute Wall

CB

“ *Barb I was sorry to hear about your husband's death. My thoughts are with you and your family.* ”

Carolyn Bachtold - April 09, 2015 at 10:13 AM

CB

“ *Carolyn Bachtold lit a candle in memory of Rodney P. Burwell* ”



Carolyn Bachtold - April 09, 2015 at 10:12 AM

CF

“ *Cheryl Paul and The Farm Forum purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Rodney P. Burwell.* ”



Cheryl Paul and The Farm Forum - April 08, 2015 at 12:53 PM



“ *Lily and Rose Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of Rodney P. Burwell.* ”



April 07, 2015 at 01:51 PM

DA

“ *DU Office of Student Activities purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Rodney P. Burwell.*



DU Office of Student Activities - April 06, 2015 at 05:49 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Rodney P. Burwell.*



April 06, 2015 at 05:10 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Rodney P. Burwell.*



April 06, 2015 at 03:41 PM

CC

“ *CTS Aspen & Co. purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Rodney P. Burwell.*



CTS Aspen & Co. - April 06, 2015 at 02:49 PM

SR

“ Barbara, My thoughts are with you and your sons at this special time. Rod and all of you are in my prayers.

Stephanie Raha

Stephanie Raha - April 05, 2015 at 03:51 PM

FS

“ Dear Barbara, Peter, Blake and Michael, you are in our hearts and prayers as you celebrate the life and passing of your beloved Rod.....A cherished husband, a devoted father and a valued member of the community; Rod Burwell was indeed a very special man.

To all who knew him and loved him Rod will never be gone.....So dear friend Good Night and God Bless.

Marie & Frank Sweeney

Frank Sweeney - April 05, 2015 at 08:48 AM