



## Wayne Owen Podratz

April 8, 1940 - July 5, 2024

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A Life Remembered

Wayne Owen Podratz, the farmhand, grain truck driver, grocery bagger, mail room errand boy, computer operator, Air Force Reserve medic, and successful business executive, who proudly hailed from rural Moltke Township, died at his Minnetonka home on July 5, 2024. He was 84 and more than a little disappointed that he failed to reach his goal of 100, besting his mom's record of 99 years.

Born on April 8, 1940 in the New Ulm hospital, he was the oldest of seven children born to Helen Sophie (Kirchhoff) and Oscar Carl Podratz. In steady succession, Wayne was joined by Ruth, Kenneth, Warren, Kathleen, Terrance, and Brian.

Wayne got his good looks and sense of humor from his dad. His honesty and lack of pretention came from his mom. But his cool factor, that ability to navigate through change and adversity with a sense of calm and resilience, was all his own.

THE BOY FROM MOLTKE TOWNSHIP

Wayne lived his first years on a farm in Moltke Township in central Minnesota. At six, his family moved to another rural home with only four rooms and an outdoor biffy. What the family may have lacked in space they made up for in simple pleasures. Wayne recalled many happy days riding his bike up and down the country roads and a 10th birthday party where his popularity soared when he offered goat rides to all of his buddies.

Helen and Oscar Podratz were faithful Lutherans and their connection to nearby St. Peter's Lutheran Church spanned generations. It is where Wayne was baptized, confirmed, and attended the church-sponsored grade school for eight years.

Ready to begin high school in nearby Gibbon, Wayne moved down the road to live with neighbors and work as their farmhand. Harold and Irene Luehrings and their two small children welcomed him to their family. Wayne's move not only freed up some space at the tiny Podratz house, but his farmhand earnings helped support the family. Throughout high school Wayne kept up his studies and his farm chores, caring for the cattle, pigs, and chickens, and managing field work, as well.

#### HARD-EARNED COLLEGE EDUCATION

School and work. Work and school. It was a theme that continued throughout his college years, as well. He spent the summer after graduation driving a grain truck across a wide swath of Montana to earn enough money to enroll in the accounting program at the Minnesota School of Business in the fall of 1958.

Over the next years Wayne cobbled together odd jobs to pay for tuition and books and eked out enough to cover rent, food, and gas money. He took college classes only as he could afford them. In those days you could find him bagging groceries at the Great Northern Market, keeping the bar stocked at

Buster's, a popular watering hole, where he studied in the basement at night, and later working in the mail room as an errand boy at Apache Corporation, where mentors convinced him to transfer and continue his accounting studies at the University of Minnesota.

To his already demanding work and school schedule, Wayne added military service joining the U.S. Air Force Reserve and serving as an air evacuation medic from 1962 to 1966. His tours of duty included military bases in Europe and regular shuttles between Japan and the U.S. returning gravely wounded soldiers from Vietnam. He left the Air Force with the rank of sergeant and extensive wound care experience he hoped never to make use of again.

#### FROM THE MAIL ROOM TO THE BOARD ROOM

In 1958 Wayne began his 13-year journey of becoming an "overnight" business executive success. Apache saw potential in the young mail room errand boy and offered opportunities that moved him up and around the company, including a stint as a computer operator working nights while he attended day classes at the UofM. Promotion after promotion eventually led to his being named director of investor relations. Two Apache executives took notice and recruited Wayne to join their start-up company, Dyco Petroleum, where he served as Executive Vice President from 1971 to 1985 and helped the fast-growing company list on the New York stock exchange in record time. Later, Dain Bosworth came calling and Wayne said yes, serving as Senior Vice President from 1989 to 1994. The last 15 years of his career found Wayne serving as the Chief Financial Officer of Real Financial Credit Union from which he retired in 2009.

No matter the company or his role, Wayne's colleagues could count on his intelligence, approachability, integrity, and that Wayne cool factor, his ever-present sense of calm and resilience.

## DO WHAT YOU CAN

As proud as he was of his career, Wayne was much more than his work and a job title. After all, he was the son of Helen and Oscar, who while raising seven kids and holding multiple jobs to support the family, set a standard for giving back to the local school and church. Even in retirement Helen continued volunteering as a reading tutor for elementary school children. That might explain Wayne's own decades-long commitment to tutoring. In his case, it was adult learners, many of whom were enrolled in literacy and English as a second language programs in the city of Bloomington. While he downplayed his impact, there are countless adults and their families whose lives are better as result of Wayne's guiding efforts. Later, when asked to help a north Minneapolis nonprofit stabilize operations, Wayne jumped in and put his accounting acumen to work volunteering for Juxtaposition Arts - JXTA. Again, Wayne was characteristically lowkey about his role saying: "I just help out with the bookkeeping." But his enthusiasm for the JXTA program that provides visual arts literacy training and design-based jobs for community youth, was anything but lowkey. He loved the program and was inspired by its dedicated staff and talented students. Wayne's many quiet volunteer efforts reflected his "Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can." attitude.

## THAT'S P, AS IN PNEUMONIA

How Wayne met his wife, Pat, reads like a movie script. It was 1985. Pat owned the American Traditions shoeshine company and her daughter, Barbara (Bobbi), managed all six locations. Ever the well-groomed business executive, Wayne was a weekly customer. Bobbi sized Wayne up (as only a daughter can) and after a number of visits suggested that he call her mom, who was also single. A few weeks later he did call and introduced himself saying: "This is Wayne Podratz. I was given your number by Bobbi, the shoe shiner." Pat said: "Who is this?" Wayne replied: "Wayne Podratz. That's P - as in pneumonia - odratz."

With that kind of humor, Pat felt compelled to accept his invitation. They met for coffee at the Sofitel and discovered that their mothers had gone to school together in (wait for it) Moltke Township and that they knew many of the same people. It was fate and a life together that was meant to be. They married on Valentine's Day 1987, bringing together two families of young adult children from previous marriages - Wayne's son, Daniel, and daughter, Kim, and Pat's two daughters, Bobbi and Kathryn. As with most remarriages, their lives got bigger. Wayne brought his circle. Pat brought hers. And together, they discovered shared interests and passions.

They both loved travel. Wayne introduced Pat to motorcycling and she was game from the start. Sans tattoos, but decked in head-to-toe leather, they regularly took to the open road and enjoyed years crisscrossing the country chasing fun at every turn on their Honda Gold Wing. Meanwhile, Pat made sure their adventures extended beyond biker road trips. England, Italy, and Mexico were favorite destinations. And, with far-flung family and friends, they made a point of visiting the West Coast as often as possible.

They both loved theater and fed that interest with 40 years of season tickets to the Guthrie.

And they both loved staying fit. Club membership was a must. And regular workouts were a shared passion, even after Wayne retired and decided (despite the fact he had more free time) that the perfect time for them to work out was 3 a.m. Wayne's "up and at 'em" attitude can only be explained as a throwback to his boyhood days on the farm. Pat's support for their middle of the night workouts can only be explained as pure dedication to the man she affectionately referred to as Mr. Wonderful.

THE ART OF LOVE

To the family he and Pat created - the shared children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren - Wayne offered the greatest gift anyone could give another person - he believed in them and their dreams. From oldest to youngest, he worked hard to be a steady, loving presence in their lives. You could find him in the stands at athletic events, in a seat at their concerts, plays, or recitals, or offering a pat on the back at their graduations. He danced at their weddings, held their babies, and applauded all their successes. He was also there on the tough days, when worlds collapsed, and hearts were broken and needed mending. Each one has a Wayne story that offers a glimpse into who he was and the difference he made in their lives.

Wayne also had a special talent for making friends and keeping those friendships alive. Whether you knew him from Moltke Township, college, any job he ever held, the neighborhood, or any other way your paths crossed, he made you feel special. No matter how long between visits or calls, Wayne made it easy to pick up just where you left off. Every friend felt like a close friend. He had an easy manner and gentle humor. He was a great listener. He offered unwavering support, but also spoke hard truths, when needed. He was always good company, played the perfect host, and could be counted on to serve the best martini. He laughed at your stories and shared some great ones of his own. He was the kind of friend everyone wants and so few are ever lucky enough to find.

WELCOMING. REMEMBERING. CELEBRATING.

Wayne now joins his parents Helen and Oscar Podratz; brother, Terrance; mother-and-father in-law, Mildred and Gilmore Rehwaldt; brother-in-law, Steven Rehwaldt; and granddaughter, Sophia Abed.

Keeping his memory are his large and loving family, including his beloved wife of 37 years, Patricia Rehwaldt Podratz; his son, Daniel Podratz, Sr. (Nayu), Santa Barbara, CA; his daughter Kim O'Neil (Sean), Apple Valley, MN; Pat's

daughters Barbara Clay, Minnetonka, MN, and Kathryn Carucci (Mark Marthaler), Bloomington, MN; shared grandchildren Mallory Stevens Murphy (Ryan), Ojai, CA, Daniel Podratz, Jr., San Diego, CA, Naomi and Narilyn Podratz, Santa Barbara, CA, Heather O'Neil, Burnsville, MN, Patrick O'Neil, Eden Prairie, MN, Rachel Abed, Minnetonka, MN, Ryan Carucci, Minneapolis, MN, Alyssa Carucci Hill (Christopher), Apple Valley, MN; Brittany Carucci, St. Louis Park, MN, and Lexi Marthaler Stanley (Brett), St. Paul, MN; shared great-grandchildren Austin Murphy, Ojai, CA, CJ and Sophia Hill, Apple Valley, MN, and Jack Stanley, St. Paul, MN; Wayne's siblings Ruth Podratz Anderson (Lyndon), Hector, MN, Kenneth Podratz (Carol), Granite Falls, MN, Warren Podratz (Marie), Mesa, AZ, Kathleen Podratz Sawyer (Don), Apple Valley, MN, and Brian Podratz (Terry), Minnetonka, MN; Wayne's in-laws Judy Rehwaldt Wiberg (Jim), Mahtomedi, MN, Nancy Rehwaldt Karon (Jeff), Santa Cruz, CA, and Nina Rehwaldt, Minneapolis, MN; and many nieces, nephews, cousins, and countless friends.

You are invited to celebrate Wayne's long and wonderful life on Thursday, July 25, 2024, at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, 5025 Knox Ave South, Minneapolis. Visitation begins at 10 a.m., services at 11 a.m., with lunch to follow in the Fellowship Hall. The service will be live streamed (<https://mtolivet.org/livestream/>). Final ceremonies at Lakewood Cemetery, Minneapolis, will be private.

In lieu of floral arrangements, Wayne requested that you remember him by sharing a laugh with family and friends, toasting to the end of a good day or the promise of a new one, or, if so inclined, making a contribution to Mount Olivet Lutheran Church (<https://mtolivet.org/ways-to-give/>), Juxtaposition Arts - JXTA (<https://juxtapositionarts.org>), or to a charity you believe is making the world a better place.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JUL **25.** 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Mount Olivet Lutheran Church (So. Mpls)  
5025 Knox Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55419

## Church Service

JUL **25.** 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Mount Olivet Lutheran Church (So. Mpls)  
5025 Knox Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55419

# Tribute Wall



“ Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels created a Church Service for Wayne Podratz in memory of Wayne Owen Podratz



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Washburn-McReavy - July 10, 2024 at 10:12 AM



“ I remember Wayne's customized 54 Chevy convertible. What a machine!

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Gary Johnson - July 13, 2024 at 10:11 PM