



Terence R. Wahl

March 18, 1930 - February 17, 2022

Terence R. Wahl, 91, ornithologist, environmentalist, and patriarch to many, died at home on Thursday, February 17th, 2022.

Born in Bellingham on March 18, 1930 to Ralph Wahl and Jean Kennedy Wahl, Terry graduated from the University of Washington, earning a degree in business, and attended New York University in Manhattan. In 1951 he married Robin Geske, and entered the long-lived family business, Wahl's department store in Bellingham.

In 1972 he changed occupations and became a full-time field ornithologist. For over thirty years following his departure from retail, he worked at what he called "the equivalent of three part-time jobs for half pay," writing environmental impact statements concerning breeding bird habitats, for both state and federal governments. He was a pioneer in bird census on the west coast, and started one of the earliest ecotourism businesses in the state – leading ocean-going tours out of Gray's Harbor, educating his clients in the identification and ways of pelagic birds. He taught ornithology classes and conducted local birding trips for many years. In the mid 1970s he was a bird observer on a NOAA ship sailing to Peru and west to find the origin of La Nina, and on other trips across the North Pacific and Bering Sea, several aboard Japanese research vessels. His connections in the birding world brought many people to the Washington coast and to Bellingham, and he

started many long friendships through this work.

He published "Guide to Bird Finding in Washington" in 1977, then "Birds of Whatcom County," last edition in 1995, and "Birds of Washington: Status and Distribution," published by Oregon State University Press in 2005, compiled and edited with two fellow ornithologists.

Terry imbued in his children a great love of the natural world, through camping trips in all kinds of weather, days spent in the woods and salt-marshes, memorable road trips throughout the west, in seeking and finding bird species. He taught them basic carpentry, beekeeping, how to shoot a basketball, how to make a pun that would leave others groaning in despair. His innermost concerns were to take care of the environment. He was one of the stewards of the Earth who didn't mind being called a curmudgeon.

Preceded in death by his younger brothers, Richard Wahl (Donna Wahl) of Los Angeles, and Edward Wahl of Bellingham, Terry is survived by Robin, their six children and their offspring: Jamie Wahl, of McNeal, AZ, and his son, Scott Pavek (Kelly Dobler) of Burlington, VT; Tim Wahl, of Bellingham, his former wife, Eden Alexander, and their daughters, Tobie Wahl (Stephen Feinstein and Ezra) of Austin, TX and Phoebe Wahl (Peter Scherrer and Hazel) of Bellingham; Erin Wahl (Richard Weight) of Edmonds, WA, her daughter Anissa Bower of Seattle and Anissa's daughter Sabine Weston of Seattle; Erin's son Joe Bower of Seattle; Maura Wahl of Tucson, AZ, and her sons Anthony Nicoletta, of Mexico City, and James King, of Tucson; Brendan Wahl of Bellingham; and Megan Wahl (Martin Wahl) of Portland, and her daughter Esme Ace of Dunedin, New Zealand, and many friends.

He will be missed.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Whatcom Land Trust.

Tribute Wall

EW

“ Terry, I will always remember your call telling me about your baby brother’s passing. I’m sure you had to muster all your will to remain calm and strong while telling me that my Dad had passed away. I will remain eternally grateful that you were the one to tell me. I fondly remember the Christmas and summer visits to your home overlooking Bellingham Bay and the railroad track. It was such a treat to spend time at such a perfect location. One of my favorite memories of you is the day, years ago, when you set up a net at Ralph’s house to catch birds and tag them. I was amazed at how many birds flew right into that net; I knew I was in the presence of a master ornithologist. You have taken flight as I remember your wry humor and calm demeanor. Rest in peace, uncle.

Erich Wahl - March 13, 2022 at 12:00 AM

JW

“ All of us who love the Bellingham and Whatcom natural environments have lost a true friend.

judith e wiseman - March 09, 2022 at 12:00 AM