



**REMEMBERING**  
**Waldemar Peter Froese (Wally)**

November 28, 1941 - March 3, 2024



**Tribute from Wiebe and Jeske Funeral Home**

Wiebe and Jeske Funeral Home Staff send our condolences to family and friends.

**Tribute from Will Jesse**

Relation: We became friends at the Abbotsford Growers Co-operative, a raspberry packing facility in Abbotsford, BC.

March 19, 2024

I, Will Jesse became friends with Wally Froese while I was working as the Plant Superintendent from 1991 to 1996 at the Abbotsford Growers Co-operative, a large grower-owned Coop in Abbotsford, BC. In bumper-crop years this facility processed up to 11 million pounds of raspberries.

A point of interest to me is the farm that Wally's family bought on Mt. Lehman Road was the same farm where our large Jesse family was housed when we moved from Niagara-On-The-Lake, Ontario to Abbotsford, BC. At that time the 40 acre strawberry farm was owned by Mr. Abe Dyck. With such a large berry farm, not everything worked out according to plan and repairs had to be made to the equipment so it would be ready to run again early the next morning, so the harvested fruit delivery to the Coop at times had to be delayed. So who else but Wally himself would arrive late, often at 10 pm and occasionally later to the processing plant. He arrived driving very slowly, as though apologetically in a slow-moving, and heavily overloaded flatdeck truck. Wally drove the truck himself but even at that late hour he never looked tired or out of energy.

Delivering fruit to the coop was traditionally done in stacks of 15-high, single-column berry flats which were burdensome to load that way onto a large 3-ton flatdeck truck at the farm. It was also slower to unload at the Coop, forcing other growers to wait patiently while Wally's large truck was being offloaded by a swarm of dock workers. So Wally asked the Coop's Board of Directors if his farm could deliver the fruit-filled berry flats on pallets - he was turned down and he was very angry at that. It was however discussed at meetings during the winter months and it was agreed that his farm could be a test case for the next harvest. Forklifts quickly unloaded each pallet and the practice was successful. The main concern was that with the extra farm dirt brought onto the Coop's receiving dock from the pallets which were placed and then loaded on the ground, then picked up by a front end forklift tractor, had the potential for insect contamination between farms. However, the pallet delivery was not mentioned again at board meetings and the practice continued the following years - it was a forward thinking practice, moving from the very traditional way of receiving fresh fruit.

Every year the Coop experienced "all-nighters" for processing the raspberries picked that day. The dayshift crew of 111 employees would begin working at 10 am and 9 hours later the 7 pm nightshift of 111 employees stepped into place without even stopping the conveyor belts. This crew then worked through the night until 10 am the next day, 15 hours, and the dayshift crew couldn't believe that the previous day's fruit was just being finished. This is farming and once a bumper-crop harvest begins, you can't stop it. It was during one of these all-nighters that I was having a middle of the night dinner at 1 am at the Crossroads Restaurant and Wally who also was working very late came by just to say hello and acknowledge that we both were doing what it took to get that day's work done. When I went to pay, Wally had already paid for me!!! To this day, I still tell that story and I have not forgotten what that did for me - it was a heartfelt appreciation for my efforts to do whatever it took to keep one of the many facets of a berry harvest moving. I thanked Wally for that act of kindness which could not have come at a more appropriate time for me.

Will Jesse

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**Tribute from Jim and Linda Janzen**

Relation: family

Dear Velma and family,

Jim and I are sorry to hear that you have lost Wally. We didn't know him well, but we feel we know him better after reading the lovingly-written biography online. Thinking of you all.

