



Winifred Stirling Voelckers

April 1, 1932 - November 29, 2022

Winifred (Wini) Stirling Voelckers passed away on November 29, 2022, at the family ranch north of Riverside. She was born April 1, 1932 to parents Wilbur and Agnes Stirling, growing up near Logan, Utah, with her brother William (Bill) and sister Cathryn (Kay). After a year of college, she met Carl, the love of her life, when both were working summers at Yellowstone National Park. She and Carl were married in the fall of 1951 in Utah. After Carl finished his degree, they moved to Moses Lake, pursuing a “homestead” land lottery. They did not win, but fell in love with eastern Washington. Carl took a job in Wenatchee, where they started a family with kids Paul, Neil, and Steve, and built a lovely home.

Wini was determined to complete her degree, so the family relocated to Ellensburg, with Carl again working for the City Health Department. Wini completed three years at Central Washington University, earning a teaching certificate in 1961.

With degree in hand, Carl and Wini jumped into their long-held dream to work the land, purchasing the Red Apple Orchard outside of Malott. Just before moving, Kris, the final child, was born. These were challenging and exciting years -- Wini started teaching, Carl learned to raise the finest apples, and the boys grew up in a perfect country setting.

Wini was an excellent teacher, starting in English at Okanogan High School, then broadening into special education and enrichment classes, with focus on equity and student success. She had an incredible work ethic, balancing farm demands and her passion for expanded teaching opportunities. This first led to her master's degree through Eastern Washington University, followed by completed doctoral course work.

In 1970, Carl and Wini bought Cache Ranch, north of Riverside, where the now teen-age boys were key to its operation. Within two years, Wini was hired by Wenatchee Valley College in an administrative and teaching role with the Omak north campus, rising to Dean with the college in 1977. In this role, she was instrumental in strengthening the new branch with enrollment increases, broadened course offerings, and early use of distance learning. The success of the program led to construction of Friendship Hall in 1980, and remodeling of other facilities.

Wini linked many facets of the Okanogan Valley community, and was loved for her intelligence, warmth, and ability to make things happen. She was focused on providing education for underserved populations and programs to serve critical needs. This led to links with the Colville Tribes, a variety of distance classes, and establishment of nursing and business administration programs.

Wini served on several boards and commissions, with a key role in the development of The Support Center. She also worked with the Dispute Resolution Center, Mid-Valley Hospital Board, and Okanogan Valley Orchestra and Chorus. She was particularly proud of her role in the successful fund-raising and construction of the Omak Performing Arts complex.

This work ethic was seasoned with a zest for adventure and travel. She and Carl traveled around the world, with trips abroad to Turkey, China, Ireland, Scotland, and the European mainland. She was particularly proud of her Scottish ancestry. Wini was an avid and accomplished swimmer, with a particular love for scuba diving in the Caribbean, frequently with her niece

Gigi. Her other travel passion was Alaska, which she connected to on a deep emotional level. She, Carl, and the boys worked together to build a remote and beloved family cabin and it was her favorite retreat.

As her health diminished, Wini's greatest wish was to stay on the ranch she loved, a wish enabled by her son Steve (Pat Staggs), who continues to operate Cache Ranch. Special thanks go out to her caregivers, Leann and Jaime, whose commitment made them a part of the family.

She is survived by her other sons Paul (Mary Pat Wyatt), Juneau, Alaska; Neil (Sharon Mallett), Juneau, Alaska; Kris (Nancy), Stanwood, Washington; her sister Kay Comer, Spokane; daughter-in-law, Debra Conway; many loving grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by Carl, and her brother William Stirling. A celebration of Wini's life is planned for April 1, 2023. Time and place will be announced.

Previous Events

Celebration

APR 1 (PT)

River Valley Funeral & Cremation
P.O Box 949
Okanogan, WA 98840

Tribute Wall



“ *Winifred Stirling Voelckers*

October 23, 2023 at 01:06 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Winifred Stirling Voelckers.*



March 30, 2023 at 12:26 PM



“ *I was lucky enough to serve on the Board of the Okanogan Valley Orchestra and Chorus with Wini. Her wisdom and kindness brought us new members into the fold and showed us how to contribute to this, be loved organization. She was a force for good in our Community.*

Susan Graves

Susan Graves - January 04, 2023 at 12:01 AM



“ *I am so sorry to hear of her death. I was a student at WVC-Omak, entering the nursing program, and her support, humor, and intelligence were an inspiration to me. She always thought to lift others up, modeling this care for others. I know she did this for countless others. What a gift to our community she was.*

Sandy Vaughn - December 08, 2022 at 10:14 AM

CM

“ Wini was a mentor to me. She changed my life. ❤️ Talk about a strong woman role model! After her stroke I went to Alaska with her on Neil's boat, and afterwards I played cribbage with her every month or so, even after I moved to Bellingham. She was a valued friend. She did SO much for Okanogan county. RIP

Carol McMillan - December 08, 2022 at 08:18 AM

AR

“ David Lindeblad introduced me to Wini and we were the last three Deans of WVCO. I knew I was among two great supporters of our students and the college in Omak and it was an honor to work a bit with Wini on the Foundation. Rest easy.

Alex Roberts - December 07, 2022 at 01:05 PM

DC

“ Wini was one of my most favorite teachers. Little did I know we would work together as I became a teacher of one of her children and fellow member of various boards serving the community and the Wenatchee Valley College North Foundation. She was always able to pull things together and get people to agree to accomplish big goals. She became a friend that always brought a smile to our conversation whenever we would see each other. She accomplished the most important task of being an educator and that is making one feel confident they can make something better and it is their opportunity to do so. A stellar lady.

DENNIS CARLTON - December 05, 2022 at 06:31 PM

TN

Much love to her family and with deep respect to her memory. My mother-in-law, Loretta Nansen and Winni were long time movers and shakers together a d dear friends. I am so proud to call her grandson, Nathan, my son-in-law. Love this family. Many the best memories hold you all.

Teresa Nansen - December 07, 2022 at 07:21 PM

RS

So very sorry to hear of Winnie's passing. Chris and I spent a wonderful time with her at Bay of Pillars along with Neil and Sharon I will never forget. What an amazing woman. God bless all family and friends during this difficult time...

Roxanne Sarrett - December 07, 2022 at 08:15 PM

NP

Winnie was an amazing example of leadership and a pillar in the Community. She and my mother, Hazel Burnett, worked diligently to insure Wenatchee Valley College was a success, as well as so many other Community programs. My condolences to the family. I am sure her and my mom will be enjoying each other on the other side as well. Our lives are better having known Winnie.

Nancy Phillips - December 07, 2022 at 09:43 PM