

# Dr. Bernard "Bernie" Sonntag

October 21, 2019

1940-2019

It is with joy and gratitude that we reflect on and celebrate the life of our father Bernard "Bernie" Sonntag who, surrounded by his family, passed away peacefully on October 21, 2019 at the age of 79 in Saskatoon. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Mary Sonntag (nee Ortman), their children and families: son, Calvin and Brenda Sonntag and their children, Anna and Ryan; son, Galen and Corinne Sonntag and their children Kyle, Brett and Kelsey; daughter, Cory and Jeff Solheim and their children Isaac and Evan; and sisters Audrey Rath and Pat Sonntag and their families.

Bernie was born in 1940 to parents Henry and Annie Sonntag and grew up on the family farm in Goodsoil, SK with siblings Anita, Jerry, Pat, Lois and Audrey. Agriculture was always a big part of Dad's life and after briefly considering Engineering, attended the University of Saskatchewan graduating with a BSA (Agriculture) in 1962 after which he began his career with Agriculture Canada. An M.Sc. degree (Ag. Economics) from the U. of S. followed in 1965 and after a short appointment in Ottawa, Dad moved his growing family to Indiana to take his Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics at Purdue University, completing it in 1971. His ag-economics career really started to take shape after moving to Lethbridge, AB. Following nine wonderful years at the Lethbridge Research Station, Dad moved the family to Saskatoon in 1979 where he led the ag-economics team of Agriculture Canada before moving to Brandon, MB in 1980 as Director of the Agriculture Canada Research Station. Following six terrific years Dad transferred to the Swift Current Research Station in 1986 as Director making a similar move to the Lethbridge Research Station in 1989 where he served until 1995. Dad finished his 37-year career in Regina, SK in 2000 as the Director General for PFRA.

Dad was an active community member in every city where he and Mary lived. He was a baseball coach, curling team and golf club member and perhaps most notably a passionate member of the Rotary Club. Perhaps Dad's greatest gift to this world was the philanthropy connected to his service to others, a natural extension of who Dad was and a reflection of

his deeply held Christian faith. Not one to give much overt advice to his children and others, he instead led more powerfully by example. His devotion to the charitable endeavours supported by the Rotary Club, particularly international disaster relief programs, were well known to many. What was known to far fewer, were his contributions to the world in his international project work. It can be said that Dad and the tremendous team of scientists at Agriculture Canada Research Station (Swift Current) played an instrumental role in assisting Brazilian farmers in converting to zero-till practices which offered significant productivity improvements to local farmers, Brazilian agriculture in general and the sustainability of those practices. Perhaps most notably, both before and after retirement from Agriculture Canada, Dad took on numerous advisory projects in China, many of them of as a volunteer, traveling there more than 50 times over the years. His work with CIDA, World Bank and other organizations advised on agricultural and environmental policies and his contributions positively impacted water-use, permanent cover and other policies helping farmers better understand the options available to them to market their production. It could be convincingly argued that his work there improved the lives of millions of people. More modestly put our dad was a good man and the Earth would be well served to have more like him.

The family would like to thank everyone who supported Bernie in his final years especially the wonderful people at Circle Drive Special Care Home. Bernie's life will be celebrated by family and friends as a Mass of Christian Burial on Saturday, November 2, 2019, 10:30 a.m. at Holy Spirit Parish, 114 Kingsmere Pl, Saskatoon SK. Please RSVP at [bernieslastbash@sonntag.ca](mailto:bernieslastbash@sonntag.ca). Private interment will take place in Saskatoon. In lieu of flowers please consider a donation to the Alzheimer's Society of Saskatchewan. Arrangements in care of David Schurr – Mourning Glory Funeral Services (306) 978-5200.