



### **Obituary – Vernon David Erb**

Vernon David Erb, born October 24, 1935 passed on to his maker in the early morning of May 20, 2020. Vernon was home with family as he lived out his last days in a short battle with Leukemia.

Vernon was born on a farm on the Third line of Wellesley Township. Growing up Vernon and his brother and sisters walked to school each day to the one room schoolhouse SS-8 where Mrs. Hay gave him his only formal education. He did not enjoy his time in the classroom and spent a lot of his time staring out the window looking at the dump trucks driving by from the local gravel pit. Despite Vernon's distaste for school, he completed his grade 8 education in 7 years so he could join his father on the farm. The family farm was primarily dairy including a prized apple orchard. Vernon would see the trucks coming to pick up milk and yearn to see the world behind the wheel of a truck. At 18 Vernon's father let him leave the farm to "get the trucking thing out of his system".

Vernon's first job outside of the farm was for Don M Sindall of New Hamburg where he trucked to New York City, Pennsylvania and Florida as well as locally in Ontario. Vernon met his wife Viola in 1957 and shortly thereafter were married and the first of three children were on the way. It was time to stay closer to home and raise a family so Vernon bought his first truck in 1959. Some early disappointments and breakdowns required prodding from Viola to keep the faith and dream of trucking alive in the early days. Ontario trucking was highly regulated back then and Vernon sought out Ontario PCV Authority until he finally secured a significant license in 1971. That was the turning point of trucking refrigerated foods, which is still the mainstay of Erb Transport today that employs over 1500 people. Vernon's management style was one of honesty and loyalty to suppliers, customers and employees. After 61 years in business, many of the same supplier and customer relationships are still intact. Vernon generated a loyalty from the people that helped build the business that is something to be proud of. The success of the company over the years was shared with many charities and food banks across the province.

Over the years, in addition to founder and President of the Erb Group of Companies, Vernon served on the boards of the Ontario Trucking Association, Transport for Christ and the Greater European Missions. While ever humble and unassuming Vernon was recognized for many awards including; OTA-Trailmobile Service to Industry award, Governor General 125 Commemorative medal, Colonel Robert Hardie Lifetime achievement award from the OTA, Waterloo County Hall of Fame, Waterloo Region Junior Achievement Entrepreneur of the year award, Kitchener Westmount Rotary club Paul Harris Fellow award, Wilmot Township Citizen of the year award and most recently the Canada 150 award for Kitchener-Conestoga.

After 43 years getting "the trucking out of his system" Vernon semi-retired and went back to his farming roots with the purchase of a farm. Farming and driving truck was Vernon's retirement with the exception of an annual trip to their winter home in Sarasota Florida. It was always a surprise when Vernon and Viola would leave to drive south and usually into a snowstorm. For a time Vernon and Viola shared a place with Brother-in-law Titus Beam and Violet in the Bahia Vista Estates. Besides fellowship at Bahia Vista Mennonite church, Vernon looked forward to competing on the shuffleboard court. Towards spring, Vernon would be on the phone getting Dave Weber and Kevin Shantz working on preparing his equipment ready for planting and other bulldozing jobs which he had volunteered. When the crops were in the field, Vernon would hit the road in his big International 9900. His favorite trips were to Bedford Quebec and Greenville Mississippi, but he did travel as far as Edmonton Alberta and Goose Bay Labrador. His grandsons were frequent passengers and many a trip was made with Howard Lebold and Murray Stewart.

Vernon's faith in the Lord was how he led his life. Vernon was a member of Steinman's Mennonite Church and previously Crosshill Mennonite church and Mapleview Mennonite church. Many a life was touched by Vernon who always had the time to listen and nurture friends, family and co-workers. Vernon served as a father figure for many with his big heart and understanding.

Vernon will be forever missed by his beloved wife Viola (Lauver) Erb. Cherished and loving father of Karen Erb (Donald Davidson), Wendell Erb (Cheryl) and Darryl Erb (Rhonda). Vernon was a devoted and proud grandfather to Erick Buhr (Tanya Drouillard), Justin Buhr (Jamie Mackay), Lindsey Ng (Gabriel). Kyle Erb (Anne), Katie Harris (Ted), Tyler Erb (Sophia), Emma Erb, Cameron Kiecman and Nicole Kiecman. Great-grandfather of Annycka, Beau, Sophia, Ben, Cameron, Claire and Ailies. Vernon will be dearly missed by his sister Erma Bisset and by his sisters and brothers-in-law Marjorie Erb (Stanley Herrfort), Grace Torkleson, Mabel Paetkau (Walter) Violet Beam (Titus).

Vernon is now reunited with his father and mother Samuel and Lydia (Wagler) Erb, sister Vera Koehler (Fred), brother Edmund Erb, sisters and brothers-in-law Craig Bisset, Gladys Martin (Harvey) and Ken Torkleson.

A private graveside service to take place at Steinmann Mennonite Church Cemetery. A celebration of life will be held at a later date and will be announced when the available time is scheduled.

Special thanks to Dr. Reimer, Dr. Grazyck and the palliative care team of Courtney, Adrienne, Cindy and Pat who helped us care for dad at home in his last days.

Expressions of sympathy and in lieu of flowers donations would be accepted to Mennonite Central Committee, Transport for Christ – Overseas Ministry and Chaplains, Steinmann Mennonite Church or Charity of One's Choice.

Personal condolences and donation information available at [www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca](http://www.markjutzifuneralhomes.ca)

Funeral arrangements entrusted to the Mark Jutzi Funeral Home, New Hamburg.