



REMEMBERING
Michael Newman

May 2, 1944 - February 23, 2013



newspaper publisher, politician, activist, orchardist, family man

Michael Newman, former publisher of the Oliver Chronicle, has died, aged 68, after a brief illness. In his 32 years as a resident of Oliver, Michael was involved in many key community and business organizations as well as serving as an Oliver rural director and town councillor.

Michael, the eldest of three children, was born in Vancouver to Jack and Una Newman. After graduating from high school in 1962, he attended the University of British Columbia. But in that socially turbulent era of civil rights and peace movements, Michael, finding university life constricting, joined the Committee for Non-Violent Action's Quebec - Washington - Guantanamo Walk for Peace. During the march, he spent a month in jail in Albany, Georgia where he saw first-hand the realities of racial injustice.

When the march ended, Michael lived in Montreal for a few years where he worked at McGill University library and met his future wife, Ildiko. Tiring of urban life, they moved to the Kootenays, near the Pend d'Oreille River. Living in a log cabin, they fulfilled a dream of farming and living off the land. Their son, Gabriel, was born in 1972 to be joined in 1977 by their daughter, Rachel.

Their rural bliss was rudely interrupted by a BC Hydro dam whose impact unexpectedly made their property geologically unstable. The family moved to Oliver where they purchased an orchard south of town in 1980.

In 1986, Michael purchased the Oliver Chronicle from Don Somerville. Given his entrepreneurial flair and instinct for community development, the paper flourished. In recognition of his excellence as a publisher, Michael was chosen by his peers to serve on the British Columbia Press Council for many years. He sold the paper in 2008.

Michael was deeply involved in community development in Central America. He

maintained this lifelong interest through the 23 years he was active with World Neighbours Canada. In keeping with his desire to help the economically disadvantaged build their own capacity, Michael's proudest achievements were in the rural villages of Honduras and Guatemala that he visited regularly.

He met his wife Celia at a World Neighbours workshop. They shared an interest in progressive causes and sustainable development. Celia moved to Oliver from Renton, Washington and they married in 1991. Michael added her children, Jeanna and Matthew, to his family and they became frequent visitors to Oliver.

For the past 22 years Michael and Celia have supported each other's social and community projects while enjoying shared interests in gardening, birds, travel, movies, books, and what Michael would call "puttering around the yard." They also delighted in spending time with their grandchildren, Lucas and Ella.

Michael first became involved in local politics when he was elected Oliver Rural Director in 1984. He served on the local health authority in the early 1990s and, after selling the Chronicle, was elected to Oliver council in 2008, serving one term.

In 2010, he was elected chairman of the Oliver and District Heritage Society where he oversaw major changes and a thorough renovation to the Oliver Museum.

Michael was an active participant in the Oliver Rotary Club where he was a member for over 20 years and a charter member of Osoyoos Rotary Club.

Looking forward to retirement, Michael built a cabin on land near Tonasket, Washington, which he and Celia visited almost every weekend to enjoy quiet, peaceful time together and with family and friends.

Michael is survived by his wife, Celia; son, Gabriel, daughter-in-law, Lia, grandchildren, Lucas and Ella and his daughter, Rachel, all of Vernon; stepdaughter, Jeanna and her husband, Austin and stepson, Matthew, all of Seattle; brother, Denis, of Palo Alto, California and sister, Wendy, of Oliver; nephew and nieces, Reed, Alissa and Rosa.

There will be a memorial and celebration of Michael's life; date, time and place to be announced later.

Michael's family requests that those who wish to remember him with a donation, give to World Neighbours Canada, P.O. Box 1771, Oliver, BC V0H 1T0 or through its website, <http://worldneighbours.ca/>

