



Wallace Jay Nelson Jr.

May 29, 1958 - January 28, 2022

Wallace Jay Nelson, Jr. “Wally” – beloved husband, father, papa, brother, uncle and dear friend – left his earthly body on January 28, 2022, to be with his Lord and Savior. He is reunited with his loving and devoted parents, Wallace and Helen Nelson, and proud in-laws, Donald and Loretta Greer. An abundance of four-legged friends were also there to greet him, most notably his “Callie dog.”

Wally was born in Arlington, VA, unknowingly a stone's throw away from his future wife, Heather, in McLean. With Wally's love for the scenic back roads and Heather's sense of direction, it only took them 35 years to find each other. But when they did, it was truly a match made in heaven.

From Arlington, Wally and his family moved to the Fox Hill area of Hampton, VA, where he and his loyal sister, Jane, grew up. Ever involved in the community, Wally developed a love of sports, being coached throughout his childhood by his father, Wallace Sr. That legacy and commitment stuck with him as he went on to coach his own children, ranging from the infamous 0-12 Rec basketball season to AAU road trips where he took on the role of coach, chauffeur, and mentor. His mentorship extended beyond the basketball court as he provided guidance, support, and advice to many throughout his life.

After graduating from Kecoughtan High, Wally proudly went on to earn a

Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Emory & Henry College. He later completed the Young Managers Program through the University of Virginia's Colgate Darden School of Business, as well as The Levinson Institute Leadership Program. While he was immensely proud of his education, Wally lived his life honoring four basic principles: Faith, Family, Friends, and Fellowship.

Like his parents before him, Wally was a Good and Faithful servant, embodying what it meant to be a man of God. As a student, his faith was nurtured by Emory & Henry, a Methodist college, and he proudly supported his alma mater in every way, from football to fundraising. As a father, he was the faith-leader of his family, raising his children in the Methodist church. He instilled the power of communal prayer, which was practiced at every meal – with all gathered hand-in-hand, acknowledging our many blessings in thanks and gratitude.

While at Emory & Henry, Wally used his talents working as a line cook in the dining halls, nourishing his classmates with food, conversation, and friendship. From those beginnings, Wally crafted his own brand of fellowship, one he is revered for to this day. Wally thrived on bringing people together, whether for a meal, a celebration, or a Virginia Tech tailgate. He truly never met a stranger. He loved cooking as it was an opportunity to serve and be with others. This spanned from communing over a giant Wally breakfast to the famous “Wally’s Tech Tailgate Triage” at Hokie football games.

Wally’s aptly named tailgate saw the purchase of not one, but two different ambulances (neither of which routinely started) serving as home base for many rousing, joyous get-togethers, despite the outcome of the game. Wally made sure anyone who stopped by felt welcomed into the tailgate family. He made it a point to have them return game after game, adding to his growing network of new friends.

Outside of numerous radio appearances as “Tailgate of the Week” on 105.3 The Bear: Flagship Station for Virginia Tech Athletics, Wally’s life was filled with accomplishments.

His professional life began at Burlington Industries, where he became the youngest ever plant supervisor. While at Burlington, he sharpened his professional tools, laying the foundation for an esteemed career in the commercial insurance industry that spanned more than three decades, most recently as the Vice President of SIA Group. Wally’s professional motivation, combined with his love for continuing education, further led to his CIC and PWCA accreditations. Over the course of Wally’s career, his business connections blossomed into lifelong friendships – a testament to his ability to build and nurture meaningful relationships.

Wally committed himself to the betterment of his southwest Virginia community. He demonstrated his leadership skills in the Blacksburg Partnership, Junior Achievement, and the Roanoke Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce, where he served as president of the Backbone Club, the group’s recruitment arm. He spearheaded the effort to bring passenger rail service to the NRV, serving as the New River Valley Rail 2020 co-chair.

Wally’s community outreach intersected with his personal passion for golf as the board member and former president of the Blacksburg Country Club. No one quite enjoyed the golf course as much as Wally, because he certainly saw every inch of it. To quote Wally himself, “I’ve never had a long-term relationship with a golf ball.”

As much as Wally enjoyed his work and community partnerships, there was no greater joy in his life than his family. His 27-year marriage to the love of his

life, Heather Greer Nelson, was filled with many blessings, including his four children and two grandchildren.

Wally was the heart of his family, and always made sure they came first. He made all of his children feel valued and loved in their own way, bestowing a special nickname for each one and creating lifelong memories through his constant and supportive presence in their lives.

He had the privilege of serving as best man to his son Jay (“Jaybird”) as they welcomed Wally’s (“favorite and only”) daughter-in-law, Tory, to the family. Later, he was honored to officiate the marriage of his daughter Crandall (“Cran-Melon”) as he welcomed his first son-in-law, Shannon (formerly the “closest thing to a son-in-law he ever had”), to the family. When questioned on the legitimacy of his reverendship, he proudly displayed his newly printed Reverend Parking Pass, a highlight of his officiating experience.

At the wedding of daughter Krysti (“Krystine Renee”) and son-in-law Ryan (Wally’s self-proclaimed “golf protégé”), Wally specified the importance of playing Billy Preston’s 1974 You Are So Beautiful to Me for the Father/Daughter dance, as it was the song he sang to her when she was first born.

While others would take the nickname “Trainwreck” as a head-scratcher, his youngest daughter, Katherine, knew that was his way of lovingly calling her to go get him another Pepsi Zero from the fridge.

Wally’s life was full of “little buddies,” ranging from his admired nieces and nephews, Amy, Emily, Brett, and T.J., to his cherished grandchildren, Jackson and Paige. In true Papa fashion, he moved heaven and earth to fulfill his grandchildren’s desire for a fireworks display every Thanksgiving.

With Wally's glowing list of accomplishments and accolades in life, it would have been easy for him to lose sight of what's important and take things for granted, but that was never the Wally Way. He went through life with an appreciative heart and the humility of someone who impressed upon his family the value of hard work, strong faith, serving others, kind-heartedness, generosity, and finding humor in the everyday routine. Wally always had a joke, a word of wisdom, or a pun to share that matched any situation. He greeted each day with a joyful spirit that brought happiness to those around him.

Wally will be deeply missed by his "beautiful bride," Heather; children Crandall Murphy and husband Shannon, Wallace Jay Nelson III and wife Tory, Krystine Hammerle and husband Ryan, Katherine Nelson and "good friend of the family" Ben Stovall; grandchildren Jackson and Paige Nelson; sister Jane Shuart and husband Mark; nieces Amy Gingrich and husband Pete, Emily Glasscock and husband Matthew; sister-in-law Rhonda Falk and husband Mike; nephews T.J. Bourgeois, Brett Bourgeois and husband Justin/daughter Addison; as well as numerous extended family and cherished friends far and wide.

The family would like to give a heartfelt thank you to his doctor and friend, Greg Beato, as well as the Hilton Head Hospital ICU doctors and nurses for their unwavering compassion, wisdom and care for Wally and his family.

A private family service will be held on Saturday, February 5, 2022.

For all to honor Wally's memory and legacy, a celebration of life will be held on Saturday, April 16, 2022, in Blacksburg, VA (details to follow).

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Wallace Jay Nelson, Jr. Scholarship Fund at Emory & Henry College (PO Box 950, Emory, VA 24327

or www.ehc.edu/give).

Wally lived his life for others: his wife, his family, and his God. His work here is done as his eternal life begins. John 14:1-4.

“If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there – Lewis Carol” – Wally Nelson

Tribute Wall

RB

“ So very sorry to hear of Wally's passing. I got to see Wally about once year at a manufacturing plant in Galax, VA we both had business with. It was always the highlight of the trip to talk to him and listen to stories he would tell. I'll miss talking football with him at times in between. He was always such a fan of the Hokies even when they weren't doing well. He'll be greatly missed.

Robert Balkcom - February 04, 2022 at 05:28 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Wallace Jay Nelson Jr..



February 03, 2022 at 10:39 AM

BH

“ I have worked with Wally for quite a few years at Dogwood Village. He was not just our insurance broker, but became a good friend. I always enjoyed him when he visited Dogwood. When I was experiencing some health issues, he would always check on me. He will be greatly missed! May God grant you peace and comfort during this very difficult time.

Brenda Hutchinson

Brenda Hutchinson - February 02, 2022 at 02:51 PM

MB

“*Heather,
You two are THE gold standard for marriage, commitment and true love. As much as I miss him already, I laugh when I think of him and how he never acted like he knew how funny he was. I love you and pray for healing and strength for you and the kids. Mary*

Mary Henry Bolt - February 02, 2022 at 11:58 AM



“*Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Wallace Jay Nelson Jr..*



February 01, 2022 at 11:22 AM

BB

“*Wally was a great guy. It was always good to see him, whether it be when he came by the office, at his tailgate, or if we ran into each other at a VT bowl game. May God give Heather and all of the family the grace and comfort that only comes from Him. You are in our thoughts and prayers.
Barry and Ann Branscome*

Barry & Ann Branscome - January 31, 2022 at 08:53 PM

LF

“ I went to high school with Wally. Thinking about Wally one of the things I remember is he always had time to talk to you and was always so kind. My prayers are with Wally and his family during such a difficult time. It is comforting to know his family has so many beautiful memories of a wonderful man. God bless you all.

Lupita Rendon Fowler

Lupita Fowler - January 31, 2022 at 07:52 PM

RW

Our family met Wally and his family through basketball. We watched our sons play on Wallys AAU team and somehow I ended up helping him coach the team. Wally had a tremendous knack for helping others and sharing life lessons, and showing a genuine interest in the young men he coached. We remember the “moms” corner with Heather and other team moms who traveled with the AAU team and his daughters tagging along. Last, Wally was a friend and man who opened his heart to others and showed the world what a Christian man, father, husband, coach, visionary looks like. Rest in Peace our friend.

*The Family of Ron and Donna Williams
,Donzell Layden & Dereck
Salem, Va.*

Ron Williams - February 03, 2022 at 11:16 AM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Wallace Jay Nelson Jr..



January 31, 2022 at 03:36 PM

DH

“ Wally was a great friend and golf partner of mine for years. I always enjoyed his company, smile and happiness he expressed. He will be missed at Colleton. God bless you my friend and rest in peace.
Dave Hood

Dave Hood - January 31, 2022 at 03:30 PM

KA

“ Wally and I attended high school together in Hampton, and he became a good and faithful friend during that time. Always good for a laugh, and always the sweetest and kindest friend you could ever wish for. My heart breaks to know how sick he was, and I am saddened by his passing. I pray that you will all be comforted in the days ahead by the many memories you most certainly have of Wally.
May God bless you all.

Kay Holden Adams - January 31, 2022 at 11:20 AM

DP

“ Such a great man. I grew up with Wally, although he was older than me by 3 years, I was still able to play a neighborhood game of football, basketball, what ever the game of the day was. Everyone in the neighborhood had nicknames so I'm glad to see that he carried that tradition on. I always enjoyed his company when he travelled to Hampton in the later years. He was a joy to be around. My condolences to Heather and his children. He will be greatly missed by all that knew him. Godspeed Wally, you were a good soul and it was an honor to call you "friend".

David Porter - January 31, 2022 at 11:19 AM

TH

My deepest condolences to the family. Wally was a friend and teammate in baseball, basketball and football since the age of 12. Rest In Peace Old Friend.

Timothy Hale - January 31, 2022 at 12:03 PM

JH

“ *Wally was a dear friend from childhood. We grew up in the same neighborhood, attended school and church together and never completely lost touch once he moved away. The last time I heard from him was about 4 years ago when he sent a card and thoughtfully written note when my mom passed. He truly was one of the kindest men I've ever known and my heart breaks knowing that he has passed away. I send my condolences to Heather, his children and grandchildren, his sister, Jane, and all the extended family he so dearly loved. Wally will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him and I pray for God's comfort and peace during the difficult days ahead. ❤️🙏*

Janet Porter Holden - January 31, 2022 at 10:51 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Wallace Jay Nelson Jr..*



January 31, 2022 at 08:12 AM