



Our Family Tree

NOVEMBER
2002

A Newsletter For The Employees and Friends Of Wright Tree Service

John R. Wright (1943-2002)

John Robert Wright, 59, died Tuesday October 15, after a long, hard-fought battle with cancer. He passed away peacefully in his sleep at home, surrounded by much of his family.

A beloved and loving husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, son-in-law and brother-in-law, he was born October 1, 1943, to John L. Wright Jr., and Harriet Bolon Wright. He and his three sisters grew up in a home on Des Moines' west side that is now the Sigma Phi Epsilon chapter house at Drake University.

The family moved to West Des Moines in 1955, and John graduated from Valley High School in 1962. At Valley, he was active in choir and drama and continued to pursue these interests well into his adult life within the Des Moines community. He blessed hundreds of occasions with his beautiful singing voice, and was a soloist at Central Presbyterian Church in Des Moines for many years. There, he married his first wife Diane Evans, with whom he had two daughters, Laura and Heather.

In 1967, he graduated from Drake University with a B.S. in Business Administration and joined Wright Tree Service, the business his father and mother founded in 1933. He worked his way up from tree climber, to foreman, to vice president in just 10 years. At age 28, he faced his first battle with cancer, but fought it fiercely and won. During his first years with the company, he worked hard to build Wright Tree Service as a company with an outstanding reputation in the industry.

When his father died in 1982, John took over as president and made a name for himself as being the same kind of man as his father, whose word was as good as gold, and who believed that a solid reputation for honesty,

integrity and customer satisfaction was the most important asset of Wright Tree Service.

During his years as President and later as Chairman/CEO, John grew the company to a place of national prominence so that today Wright Tree Service ranks among the top line-clearing and vegetation management companies in the country, working in 17 states. In doing so, he maintained the loyalty, respect, and dedication of his hundreds of employees, a source of great pride to him.

His first marriage ended about 1986 after 18 years, and shortly thereafter he met his future wife Nancy and her daughter Erica. Nancy brought him much joy in their 16 years together.

Although they didn't have the chance to fulfill lifelong dreams and enjoy the benefits of many years of hard work, John was grateful for and generous with the opportunities this life had afforded him. He was looking forward to passing the reins at Wright Tree Service to his management team, an experienced group he believed was up to the task.

Even though his presence will be greatly missed, his influence over the direction and vision for the future of the company his parents started 70 years ago will continue forward. Professionally, the loss of this good man is a blow to the company and a blow to the industry. Personally, it is even more profound. As his family, we will miss his ever-present ear, uncanny insight, and unwavering character. But most of all, we will miss his presence here with us. His sense of humor, his generosity, his ability to process all of the important details before rushing to any judgment. We will never recover from this loss, but we are comforted by the fact that he is with God,

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Forever
By Heather Wright

I will remember
Your smile, laugh, and guiding hand
Your patience, optimism, and bravery
Your wisdom, kindness, and compassion
Your generosity, your advice, your strength
Forever

I will tell about
Being your gopher when you were working
on a project
Helping you cut firewood and working in the yard
Listening to you sing and play the guitar
on the back porch
And your solos at church
Playing at the office while you worked
How you made the nightmares go away
The trips we took together
Forever

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Happie



The bells were ringing on August 31, 1991 for John and Nancy.



Granddaughter Josie looks lovingly at Grandpa as he sings at a family reunion, accompanied by sister Linda.



The mountains of Colorado – John's favorite vacation retreat.



Halloween – with younger granddaughter Kate who is now 2 1/2.



Baby Josie, now 7 1/2, and Grandpa, also known as "Papa," do some private communicating

My Dad

By Laura Wright

My dad would be embarrassed, but pleased, I'm sure, by all the attention his illness and death have been given. He always preferred things to be pretty low key and laid back. I think he would want me to write, though, mostly because he paid for my degree in journalism and he would think it practical for me to use it somehow. But low key was *definitely* his style – *not being prepared was not his style*. But he wasn't prepared for this day, not many of us are. He left no instructions for us on how to deal with his death. You see, he was too busy planning for the rest of our lives to worry about the end of his. *That was like him*. So we want to honor, remember and celebrate the life he led.

We want to say some of the things about him that he would never tell anyone. For his birthday

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Granddaughter Kate looks slightly apprehensive on her 1st birthday.



John, with wife Nancy, giving Buffy a bear hug



"When can we open the Christmas presents, Grandpa?" Josie is probably asking



It was difficult to catch John off guard but somebody did once when he was relaxing at sea.



John at the Colorado cabin with his trusted friend, Casey. Who says dogs have a rough life?

John R. Wright (1943-2002)

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in a better place than here, and we will see him again.

He was a founding member of Heartland Presbyterian Church and a member of the West Des Moines Rotary Club. He was a member and past president of the National Arborist Association and a member of the International Society of Arboriculture. He chaired the corporate fund drive at Grand View College in Des Moines and was a member and contributor to countless other civic organizations. He loved singing, boating, camping, football and spending time with his family, especially his two granddaughters.

John is survived by his wife Nancy of Waukee; daughters

Laura Wright of Des Moines; Heather Wright of West Des Moines; stepdaughter and stepson-in-law Erica and Grant Boliver of Urbandale; granddaughters Josephine Evans Wright and Kathryn Hope Rozanek; both at home; sisters Celia Wright of West Des Moines, Linda Wright of Van Meter, and Dianne Wright of West Des Moines; niece, Jennifer Wenslay of Van Meter; niece and nephew-in-law Elena and Rick Hanson of Redfield; and many more extended family members and friends who will remember him with great respect and love.

This memorial tribute was written by John's daughter, Laura Wright, and was printed in a leaflet for distribution at John's funeral service.

My Dad

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on October 1, my sisters and I wanted to do something special. We called Grand View College, where Heather is finishing up her degree and where dad attended before getting his degree at Drake University. We had decided to get him an engraved paver stone that read "In Honor of Our Father, John R. Wright". It would lie right along the main walkway up to the Administration Building. When it became known whom we wanted to honor, they upgraded the paver to the biggest one they had. "We know John, and we would like to do this." (Dad was chairman of the Grand View Corporate Fund Drive and was very instrumental in raising a record amount of money for the college.) So many people had that reaction when it came to my dad. Maybe it was partly because he always thanked people and he always meant it.

Even as he lay in bed in the hospital, he thanked the nurses for everything they did for him. His sense of humor and irony were intact, too. While he was there, the nurses for each shift would come in and introduce themselves. He greeted one by saying,

"Hi, I'm John – welcome to paradise!" Nancy caught some of it, too. One day he didn't feel the suggestion she made was what he wanted to do and his exact words were, "Back off, Bossy!" I guess a little irritation is bound to happen when someone is so worried she won't leave his side - and Nancy didn't. It's like my dad to pick someone who would love him and us that much. It's also like him to be so generous with his time, his money and all of his resources. His generosity with his resources was huge but his generosity of spirit exceeded even that.

One of the best things about my dad was that he said what he meant and he meant what he said. He kept his promises. There was a specific time that I needed his help financially. He told me that if I kept my end of the deal, the help would be a gift and we would never talk about it again. I kept my part and he never said another word.

We will miss you so much, Dad. But our lives are infinitely better in every way for the time we had with you. You did so much for everyone – at your own expense – we can never express how much it means. But we are comforted by the fact that you are at peace with God, and that we will see you again.



John with wife Nancy and their three daughters, left to right, Laura Wright, Erica Boliver and Heather Wright at last spring's Annual Meeting

Forever


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I will never forget
The crocuses and hyacinth
The sandbox you made
Peppermint ice cream
Singing in the shower
The backyard kickball
diamond

My first ride in the Dodge
My last ride in the Chrysler
The sound of your voice
The washing machine that
made my Christmas
The way I felt when I found
out that you were gone
Forever

If you have access to the Internet, you can visit us at: <http://www.wrighttree.com>

WRIGHT TREE SERVICE • P.O. Box 1718 • DES MOINES, IA 50306 • 515-277-6291

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