

Ron Wallace, founder of The Auroran, dies at 76

Ron Wallace, founder and long-time editor of The Auroran newspaper, has died.

Wallace, who had been battling an atypical parkinsonism-related disease for nearly a decade, lost his battle on Sunday afternoon. He was 76.

A former member of Council, a York Region District School Board Trustee, volunteer firefighter, and tireless community advocate, Wallace earned the moniker of 'Mr. Aurora' well before being named Aurora's Citizen of the Year in 2013.

Ron started out his career as an office boy at The Toronto Star, but after bouncing to the Canadian Press, and other organizations, a chance letter back home, which wound up in their local paper, gave him a taste for bylines.

Having studied journalism at Ryerson University, a five-year term at the Stouffville Tribune followed before eventually becoming editor of the Aurora Banner and the Etobicoke Guardian.

Wallace founded The Auroran in 2000 with a vision for a hyper-local publication serving the community.

The newspaper's early motto was simple 'If it matters to Aurora, it matters to us' and it was a motto he took seriously.

'It was probably (former Aurora mayor) Dick Illingworth who called me by name [at a Council meeting], instead of 'Hey, you with the pencil!' said Wallace shortly after his retirement in 2011 of his first positive impression of Aurora.

It was the first seed of a love affair which grew over time, with his daughter, Aurora a university professor now bearing the community's name.

'I wore Aurora on my sleeve, that's for sure,' he said, proudly.

In addition to his careers in journalism and politics, Wallace was a long-time member of the Rotary Club of Aurora, a keen supporter of the Aurora Optimist Club, the Aurora Historical Society, the Lion's Club, the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, the Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA), the Aurora Farmers' Market and a driving force behind the Aurora Street Festival, a popular annual event hosted by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, and Operation Puck-Shy.

Wallace was honoured for his work with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

'He is a stranger to very few,' said former mayor Geoff Dawe when he presented Wallace with the honour of Aurora's Citizen of the Year almost 12 months later. 'He has been an exceptionally visible and active member of our community. He came to Aurora in 1969 to work in the newspaper industry. His community involvement speaks volumes for his character and his commitment to our Town.'

'With a wealth of accolades and a lifetime commitment to his community, our Citizen of the Year's altruism can be summed up best by his own words: 'I love Aurora and that's all there is to it. I would do anything I could for this Town.'

These sentiments were shared by Mayor Tom Mrakas following Ron's passing.

'We are all deeply saddened at the news of the passing of Ron Wallace, affectionately known as 'Mr. Aurora.' What a profound loss for our community,' he said. 'Ron Wallace gave so much to Aurora, a remarkable community leader, [who] will be truly missed.'

Ron Wallace is survived by his wife, Patricia, daughter Aurora, and sister Bunny.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter