



## Wallace "Supsikwala" Strong

December 14, 1943 - August 10, 2021

Supsikwala (Wallace Clarence Strong) was born at Satus, Washington on December 14, 1943 to Margaret Nelson Strong and James Howard Strong. He passed away on August 10, 2021. His spirit thrived in a home blessed with song and prayer. His heart grew with caring and compassion. His mind expanded with intellect. His body was athletic and hard working.

Wally loved home life. He learned to be helpful to his mom and dad, chopping wood to keep the home fires burning, tending to cattle and horses whether under the blazing sun or in the middle of winter storms, fishing for salmon and trout, hunting for deer and elk and quail, pheasant and ducks, picking huckleberries, digging roots, playing with brothers and sisters, ringing bells for the shaker services and acquiring Yakama dignity in all that he did. He was gifted with leather working skills and was a superb artist. He had the most beautiful penmanship and used it to write stories about life experiences. He was a protector of the young and disadvantaged. At Celilo and Underwood he didn't hesitate to enjoin intruders in fight saving his siblings from danger.

Wally started school at Roosevelt Elementary but also attended the Celilo school where all grades were in one room. Upon completion of Junior High School at Granger he went on to Granger High School, where he did well with academics but found special joy in writing. He was the editor for the Spartan News. In the evenings he helped his younger brothers and sisters do their homework and taught them good study habits. He graduated from Granger High School in 1962 along with his sister Lenora.

While at Granger he played baseball, following his brothers Jim and Tom who were outstanding as pitcher and second baseman, respectively. Wally was both pitcher and second baseman. He was active in health education forming and serving as president of the Xwyama Runners Club and participating in fun runs throughout the northwest and in the Portland Marathon. He played co-ed softball on his brother Tom's sponsored and coached team, Satus Free Spirits as pitcher and first base. They won the championship of the All Indian Tournament at Warm Springs. He relished the little accomplishments that brought immense joy like playing on the basketball team coached by Tibbs, the Satus Cowboys who won the Reservation Championship. He talked fondly about reservation dramas like that double overtime championship game played at the Toppenish Community Center against the Wapato Furniture Factory. His teammates were his buds: Delford, Ronn, Tony, Robert, Casey, Tom, Ted, Charlie and Andy. He was a member of the US Navy Japan baseball team that won the Southeast Asia Championship in 1964. His credo was to be a good teammate and learn to contribute to make good things happen. Toward that end, he developed the curriculum for the teachers at the Santa Fe Indian School. He reminisced about playing against Mel Stottlemeyer who was a pitcher for the Mabton Vikings and would become famous as a New York Yankee who won the World Series. He said "I touched the little finger of fame."

Wally worked the agriculture fields in hops, cherries, apples, sugar beets, corn, peas and so many other crops. He said the sweat and long hours plus slave wages made him determined to leave the fields and excel in the classroom. He worked for Bill Brown, Archie Long, Sybouts Farms and the longest with the Tom Carpenter Hop Ranch. His cherry-picking days on Cherry Hill earned him 50 cents a bucket just a penny better than the 90 cents an hour working the hop fields. He often told students "If you want to skip class, play hooky, neglect homework and not study then be my guest in the fields to earn enough for baloney and chips."

Immediately upon graduation from high school Wally enlisted in the US Navy

determined to serve the Yakama Nation, the United States of America and his family, which he did with honor. He served from 1962 to 1966 and was a Vietnam War Veteran as a gunner on a patrol boat that patrolled the Saigon River. The Navy also took advantage of his writing skills and assigned him to editorial and reporting duties at San Diego and Subic Bay, Japan with his home station at Guam.

When Wally was honorably discharged from the Navy, he earned a Bachelor's Degree from UCLA. He furthered his education at Western Washington University earning a Master's Degree. He culminated his formal education at the University of Illinois earning a Doctorate Degree and earning his name Supsikwala (Educator) which was bestowed upon him in his last days. He was a man of modesty knowing that others wanted and needed his kind of education and that he considered himself fortunate. He set out to help teach. His career in academics took him to schools in Nevada and New Mexico before returning home. He worked at the Yakama Tribal School and retired as a tenured professor at the Yakima Valley College. He asked many tribal leaders to guest lecturer in his Ethnic Studies classes to help educate students on Yakama treaty rights, government and culture.

One of Wally's loves for teaching was his involvement at Camp Chaparral. He relished the challenge of stimulating the minds, hearts and spirits of kids seeking tribal culture and scholastic excellence. He was joined by other teachers from Granger High School who came to respect the high standards the Yakama Nation placed on youth. He helped manage and direct the CETA Program for the Yakama Nation, writing grants and securing funding for tribal member jobs and training skills.

The Yakama culture asks one to use your heart for the love of life and use your mind for the betterment of living. Wally taught himself to be a positive contributor to the Yakama Nation.

Wally was married to Karen Roberts Strong, Tlingit-Haida, for 49 years. She is a resident of the Cottage in the Meadow. They were partners in life and in

academics. She earned a Doctorate Degree from the University of Illinois. They have one son, Tecumseh Strong who is married to Lisa Strong and they have one son Derrick. This nuclear family is the depiction of successful parenting. They both followed the military tradition with Tecumseh still serving in the Army Reserve and having completed 15 years and Lisa having been medically discharged from the Army. Tecumseh followed Wally and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree from UCLA and Lisa earned a Bachelor's Degree from Baylor University.

Wally is also survived by an older brother Thomas Strong, Sr., younger brother Ted Strong and his wife Alta, younger sister Mary Jo John and her husband Henry and younger sister Joan Strong. His surviving family also includes numerous brothers and sisters, nephews, nieces, grandchildren and great grandchildren from the Strong, Tennewasha, Johnson, Sampson, Johnley and Thompson family lines. His best friends, Dick Marston of Anchorage, Alaska who was his best man at his wedding and Michael Tulee of Seattle, Washington also survive him.

# Cemetery Details

## McCoy Cemetery

McCoy road East of Toppenish  
Toppenish, WA

# Previous Events

## Dressing Services

AUG 12. 1:00 PM (PT)

Heggie's Colonial Funeral Home  
228 S. Alder Street  
Toppenish, WA 98948  
(509) 865-3222  
[info@heggiescolonialfuneralhome.com](mailto:info@heggiescolonialfuneralhome.com)

## Burial Service

AUG 12. 2:00 PM (PT)

McCoy Cemetery  
McCoy road East of Toppenish  
Toppenish, WA

# Tribute Wall



“ Wallace *"Supsikwala" Strong*

October 05, 2023 at 11:22 AM



“ *Condolences to the family of Wally & Karen*



**Dick Marston** - August 26, 2021 at 03:01 PM



“ *My sincere condolences to Wally's family. I worked with him at YVC for many years and attended his retirement luncheon with Karen, his son, daughter in law and grandson, along with the other faculty members in our Deccio Hallway. It was obvious how much his wife and family meant to him and I appreciated that I got to witness the love that they all shared. Visiting with him and his family that day was a blessing that I will always cherish.*

*Sincerely,*

*Janet Foster Goodwill*

**Janet Foster Goodwill** - August 12, 2021 at 03:35 PM

AD

“ *Condolences from Gary & Alyne & family*



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**alyne decoteau** - August 12, 2021 at 01:50 PM

SM

“ *Samuel Miller lit a candle in memory of Wallace "Supsikwala" Strong*



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**Samuel Miller** - August 12, 2021 at 11:43 AM

DA

“ *I delivered the newspaper to Mr Strong for 17 years he was at the end of my route so sometimes he would be waiting. He always up early and very nice*

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**Dianna Aleck** - August 11, 2021 at 06:12 PM

DA

“ *Dianna Aleck lit a candle in memory of Wallace "Supsikwala" Strong*



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**Dianna Aleck** - August 11, 2021 at 06:07 PM

RF

“ *Dr, Strong was always so kind to the men's basketball players while I was coaching. He took the time to know some of them personally and always supported the program. My condolences to the family. He will be missed.*



Ray Funk - August 11, 2021 at 05:49 PM

SW

“ *Shasta Olney Watlamet lit a candle in memory of Wallace "Supsikwala" Strong*



shasta olney watlamet - August 11, 2021 at 03:38 PM

DJ

“ *My sincere condolences & prayers to the family.*



Debbue L James - August 11, 2021 at 02:22 PM

DJ

“ *Debra M. Johnson lit a candle in memory of Wallace "Supsikwala" Strong*



Debra M. Johnson - August 11, 2021 at 12:41 PM



Caroline  
Looney

“ *Sincere condolences to family..gonna miss visiting you and the wife whom I enjoyed talking and sharing laughs with.. a lot of respect for you both. REST IN PEACE THANK YOU FOR EDUCATING ALL WITH YOUR KNOWLEDGE MR. STRONG..*



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**Caroline Looney** - August 11, 2021 at 10:11 AM

BO

“ *Bernice Owens lit a candle in memory of Wallace "Supsikwala" Strong*



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**Bernice Owens** - August 10, 2021 at 06:50 PM

MC

“ *Condolences to family.*



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**mary cree** - August 10, 2021 at 02:10 PM