



J. Spencer Van Alsburg

May 24, 2025

Spence passed away in his sleep on May 24, 2025. He was born in Holland Michigan in 1930 to Jerald and Minnie Van Alsburg. Unfortunately, his parents divorced while he was young which started Spence on a whirlwind of job opportunities starting with picking tulip bulbs when he was 6. However, don't feel sorry for Spence, because the poor kid from Holland ended up living a Grand life!

Spence graduated from Michigan State University in 1952 with a Civil Engineering degree. He met his wife Betty on a blind date and they married in September of '53. He spent two years in the Army. His first year in Infantry school at both Fort Benning, GA and became a Jumpmaster at Fort Campbell, KY. The first time Spence was on a plane, he had to jump out of it. His second year he landed in Korea right after the war ended helping build hospitals and schools. This was probably the genesis of his love of travel.

Upon his return Spence went to work for Chicago Bridge & Iron (CBI). With CBI, the family moved around. From Illinois to New Jersey to Venezuela to Brazil. When back from Brazil, the family moved to Albuquerque for a few years for a different job opportunity. By the time the family landed back in the Chicago area in 1968, Scott, Steve, Geoff and Lisa were born with Tom following shortly thereafter.

Upon their return from New Mexico, Spence and Betty started a business called Prairie Tank & Construction (PTC) due to what Spence had learned at CBI. It started out of the house and grew to two locations by the late 70's. Later PTC became known as Advance Tank & Construction (ATC).

Needing to get out of the cold of Northern Illinois, and Spence's love affair with the West, most of the family moved to Fort Collins, CO in late 1981. At that time a branch of ATC was started in Fort Collins and in 1984 moved to Wellington, CO where its Western Division and Corporate HQ still resides. ATC is about to have the third generation run the company having been in business for 58 years so far.

Spence and Betty 'retired' from the company in the late 80's but kept their eyes on what was going on for a while longer. Retirement became an open slate for travel. The two traveled all over the world, but especially to Africa. When Betty passed away in 2008, Spence continued his travel. He made it to every continent except Antarctica due to bad weather on the day he was to go. He rode camels in Egypt, got attacked by a hippo in Africa, climbed the Great Wall of China, drove from Chili to Argentina over the Andes and more. Spence had a love of hunting which took him on many safaris in Africa, backpacking on horseback or by foot in the U.S. and Canada, as well as sheep hunting in Mexico.

Spence also had a desire to help others, which often got him into interesting business adventures. He is part of a cattle ranch in Mozambique, he tried farming in Brazil, he was a partner in an equipment leasing company in Zimbabwe, had a small ranch in North Fort Collins, invested in a golf course in Nevada with an old friend, ended up owning a bar in Timnath, helped with an Ace Hardware in Windsor, and many more. If you had an idea he was game to hear you out and help you out.

However, his greatest accomplishment was the legacy he and Betty left in their five children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Scott & Susan Van Alsburg, Steve & Jaima Van Alsburg, Geoff & Patricia Van Alsburg, Lisa & Jim Clay and Tom & Valerie Van Alsburg, 15 grandchildren and 21 great grandchildren so far, as well as many friends in various parts of the world. Everyone who spent time with Spence can tell you a story about one of his and Betty's adventures. He loved to get a dry martini and talk about the glorious life they had lived. His motto was over, under or through but never around. Spence lived that motto every day.

'I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see you...' Job 42:5 RSV edition. Based on Spence's faith, we are grateful that he is now with the Lord!

A memorial service & celebration of his life will be held at 3:00 PM Monday, June 2, 2025, at LifePointe Church, 900 East Prospect Rd., Ft. Collins. All are invited to dress in colors other than black.

Memorial contributions can be made to the Tanks A Lot Fund to benefit those who need basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Donations can be made by sending a check made out to Community Foundation of Northern Colorado with a note indicating the Tanks A Lot Fund to 4745 Wheaton Dr., Fort Collins, CO or by visiting https://cfnc.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?unit_id=1418

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN 2. 3:00 PM (MT)

LifePointe Church
900 East Prospect Road
Fort Collins, CO 80524

Tribute Wall

HO

“ Our BSLC family has lost a wonderful lifelong member. We have great memories of Spence as a chalet member, always sitting outside at day’s end watching the lake and ready for a chat. He will be so missed. Sending healing hugs and love to the whole Van Alsburg family.
In sympathy, Holly and Tom O’Connell

Holly O’Connell - June 04, 2025 at 02:28 PM

TW

“ Many at BSLC will have memories of your dad. We will remember him as a chalet neighbor who still enjoyed joining our chalet association picnics on the front lawn until the time of his final visits to the Club. You wrote a wonderful tribute to him! It was inspiring to read about all he accomplished in life, and to try to imagine the energy and vision it took to do everything he did. His life could sure serve as an inspiration for young and old alike. Our best wishes to all of you! *Ted and Elisabeth Wachs and family.*

Theodore Wachs - June 03, 2025 at 04:19 AM

CK

“ We sure enjoyed our visits with your Dad when he would come to BSLC. He always had wonderful stories to tell and Chum especially enjoyed those. What a wonderful tribute to a very special person. What a life he and Betty had. Love to all of you. *Chum and Carole Kinner*

Carole L Kinner - May 29, 2025 at 07:43 AM