



## Wallace Rehner Bell

January 31, 2024 - February 19, 2025

You might be wondering why I'm writing an obituary more than a year after my son's death. Fair question. The honest answer? Because grief doesn't follow a timeline, no matter how much we're told it should.

When someone you love dies, there's pressure to do it all—plan the service, host the people, write a beautiful obituary, keep up with thank-you notes, acknowledge every kindness. And somewhere in there, you're supposed to turn your grief into something beautiful and inspiring. Easy peasy right!? So this is me, dismantling those expectations. I hope it gives someone—maybe you—permission to do this differently. There isn't a right way to grieve, no matter how often it feels like there's a checklist.

And—no surprise—this won't be a typical obituary. But I hope, as you read, you'll come to know the heart of our precious Wally—the kind of person he was, the way he was loved, and the space he still holds.

Wallace Rehner Bell was born on January 31, 2024. He was an active baby in the womb and doctors sometimes had a hard time listening to his heartbeat because he was kicking so much! From early on, he was nicknamed "Butters" by his family due to his sheer butterball cuteness. In his ultrasounds, you could see his fat rolls on his back. He measured 95% for weight and height in utero, and was born 8lbs and 14oz. My husband's first words to me after he was born with tears in his eyes was "he's perfect", and indeed he was! As second time parents, we were much more confident and felt so much happiness and joy in his arrival. I know all parents think their baby is the

cutest, but he truly was. He had big blue eyes and a smile that would melt your heart. He loved music and would immediately start dancing when a beat dropped. His favorite songs were wheels on the bus and any song from the Disney movie Coco.

Wally's favorite person was his big sister Sophia. His eyes would light up when she walked in a room. You knew he was excited because he would lift his arms up in the air and bounce on his bottom in excitement, or kick his legs furiously with joy. She was gentle and patient with him despite his obsession with destroying her craft table or stealing her juice boxes right from her hand. At dinner, when he would grow impatient in the high chair waiting for his plate Sophia would give her some of her food off her plate. She loved to climb in his crib in the morning and be the first one to greet him. Sophie and Wally belong together, and we mourn their relationship deeply.

Wallace loved water and enjoyed bathtime with his sister, swimming at the YMCA, his grandparents river house and had the chance to enjoy the beautiful ocean and beaches in Puerto Rico. Since then, water has felt sacred to me. He was baptized weeks before he died, and we released his ashes in a salt urn into the river at his service. One of my favorite authors, Rachel Held Evans, often wrote about the connection between water and faith— how the Spirit that once hovered over the waters still meets us there, making even the most ordinary drops holy.

I hope the next time you watch rain fall, take a shower, swim in the ocean, or clean up spilled water your child knocked over at dinner, you think of him. Thank you to those who have truly carried us. You have made it possible, day by day, to keep putting one foot in front of the other. Lately, my faith can often be summed up in three simple words: I don't know. And I'm learning to be okay with that. I'd rather live in the openness of big questions than in the tight grip of easy answers that don't hold.

In the darkest moments, it has been our community that has kept even the

smallest light of faith alive, so thank you for being that community for us.

In his honor we invite you to donate to the Georgia Sea Turtle Center in Jekyll Island. This organization does important ocean conservation work to protect our oceans and rehabilitate sea turtles. We recently visited and adopted a green sea turtle named Goosie in Wally's honor. She will be released back to the ocean once she recovers, and I can imagine her homecoming back to the ocean will feel similar to when we are reunited with Wally— that first dive consuming us with an overwhelming peace that we've been searching for. Until then we'll do what we can to protect our oceans, Goosie, and remember Wally. After all, every drop of water is holy.

Link: [https://crm.bloomerang.co/HostedDonation?ApiKey=pub\\_30d17ae1-ddd5-11ec-b5ee-066e3d38bc77&WidgetId=66562&\\_gl=1\\*1x6w7gy\\*\\_ga\\*Mjk2NjM5NjM1LjE3Nzk1NDkyNTM.\\*\\_ga\\_8E8ZWM7K8H\\*czE3Nzk1NDkyNTMkbzEkZzAkdDE3Nzk1NDkyNTMkajYwJGwwJGgw](https://crm.bloomerang.co/HostedDonation?ApiKey=pub_30d17ae1-ddd5-11ec-b5ee-066e3d38bc77&WidgetId=66562&_gl=1*1x6w7gy*_ga*Mjk2NjM5NjM1LjE3Nzk1NDkyNTM.*_ga_8E8ZWM7K8H*czE3Nzk1NDkyNTMkbzEkZzAkdDE3Nzk1NDkyNTMkajYwJGwwJGgw)

With love,  
Karolyne Bell and Family

Condolences may be expressed at [www.mckoon.com](http://www.mckoon.com)  
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