



Stephen Mark Wharry

October 23, 1955 - August 1, 2016

Stephen Mark Wharry was born October 23, 1955 in Texas, the state right across the border from where his parents were living at the time in Nara Via, New Mexico. Within the next few months, due to the fact that Steve's dad worked for the Rock Island Railroad, he would begin a nomadic life, first moving to McPherson and Greensburg, Kansas and then ending up in Guymon, Oklahoma where he missed out on kindergarten and almost failed first grade at Homer Long. It was at this early age that Steve started to enjoy climbing to the top of things, including on top of the grade school and the house, then later he put on a cape and pretended to be Superman, which must have worked since he didn't suffer any broken bones. It was in Guymon that Steve kept a pet horned toad and learned the magic of the Four O'Clock, a flower that opened up at four every afternoon. He also started his career in Cub Scouts, earning all the appropriate awards including Webelos. It was here that he borrowed his brother's bike and took a ride around the block, only to find himself going too fast on the downhill and landing in a patch of goat head stickers! And it was here that Mrs. King, his third grade teacher, introduced him to Laura Ingalls Wilder and the Little House stories. About midway through fourth grade, it was time to move again, this time to Enid, Oklahoma.

In Enid, Steve played at home in the summers and went to school otherwise. It was here he learned to swim at the local YMCA, and where he took up the viola as an instrument and did well enough to play Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. He continued to be involved in Boy Scouts, earning the Wolf, the Bear and the Lion patch. He spent many a day riding his bike around, primarily down to the local park, where he played along the creek. And it was here that he learned that he not only enjoyed singing, but also singing in the Methodist church, with a brief membership in the choir. It was in these long hot Oklahoma summers that he became enamored of the fudge popsicle, biking down to the local convenience store to pick up a package whenever he got the money together. It was also here in Enid that Steve's dad decided the family needed to learn to play golf, a sport Steve never played very well but still enjoyed. After a few years it was time to move onto Wellington, Kansas where Steve's mom and brother were born and where Steve's parents were married.

In Wellington, Steve finished 6th grade and attended both 7th and 8th. Here he had to give up the viola since Wellington had no orchestra. So he took up the French horn and then eventually the tuba, the primary then the later, because the band didn't have one. He learned to play the tuba well enough to win a Superior rating at the Arkansas Valley festival with "Tubateer Polka". Wellington was a small farming community where Steve and his family had been coming to for years as his maternal grandparents lived about 7 miles south of town where his grandfather was a wheat farmer. Many a summer was spent in Wellington helping his grandfather harvest wheat and in later years baling hay, putting up silage, wandering around the back forty among the cows, climbing silos, and learning to drive. It was also here that Steve spent the majority of his Thanksgivings and Christmases. Boy howdy, did Grandma Meredith know how to cook.

The first thing his grandfather allowed him to drive on the farm was the riding lawnmower and the second was the farm tractors. Have you ever tried to pop the clutch of a tractor? Just can't be done. In Wellington Steve again biked around town, teaching himself how to shoot a bow. He got into the habit of going to the bottom of the swimming pool and staring up just to see what it was like. This most certainly help spawn his love for scuba diving later in life. Here also, Steve joined Chi Rhos, a youth organization of the First Christian Church, went to Bible camp, and learned that a lot of people switched churches because "they were not getting fed", not the focus he always thought of in church. Wasn't church meant to be a place where you worshipped and praised God and Christ? Here also, Steve got his first job as a newspaper delivery boy. The highlight of that job was waiting up until all hours of the night for Saturday's edition which was printed after the results of the local high school results were in. While waiting, rubber band fights among the huge newspaper rolls were the primary order of business. This was also where Steve took his love of reading to heart, stopping and buying science fiction and fantasy. The first book he remembers in this genre was *Fantastic Voyage*. After a few years, it was time to move to Liberal, Kansas.

In Liberal, Steve went to 9th and 10th grades, watched the moon landing on a tv his dad had built years ago and got involved in model making, ships, cars, planes, and rockets. He continued to work mowing lawns and delivering papers. Here he was introduced to bowling and read books by Cousteau, which cemented his desire to learn to scuba dive. It was here that Steve took the next step on the job ladder, getting a job at an outdoor theater, picking up the grounds and cleaning the concession stand. Steve also joined the DeMolay organization, a youth service organization under the Masonic umbrella. After another few years, it was off to Iowa.

In Bettendorf, Steve continued in the DeMolay organization, eventually becoming the Master Councilor, e.g. the president of the chapter, continued to play tuba in the band, and found another job at a drive-in theater cleaning the grounds and the concession stands. (There are few jobs like cleaning up the grounds of a drive in theater.) He also got to work some of the shows which allowed him to see a bunch of movies for free. School progressed normally with him finishing high school with a 3.5 GPA and applying for college. A swing at the Naval Academy resulted in a short list appointment, which washed out because his eyesight was too bad. Finally, he opted to go to Iowa State University primarily because in-state tuition was fairly cheap at that time. Off to Ames, Iowa.

Initially entering Iowa State as a zoologist, with the intent of becoming a marine biologist, Steve quickly realized it was unrealistic to get any degree from ISU that would have led to any posting in marine science, and with a nearly failing grade in Environmental Biology, a switch in majors was called for. The switch into chemistry seemed natural after acing the final general chemistry test with little or no studying. Clearly that showed some aptitude. He was married to Sharon Sue Russett on November, 23rd, 1974 while still in college. Going through the rest of the three years was fairly unremarkable, with the expected studying, goofing off, riding his bike around campus, chemical research, etc. After four years Steve began the interview process getting a plant trip to Louisville, Kentucky. It quickly became apparent to the interviewers and to Steve that he wanted to pursue an advanced degree. He got into the chemistry program at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.

Once in Evanston, the school, research and teaching occupied the vast majority of his time, with some weekend breaks where he got to show family around the Chicago area, especially the museums. He quickly learned to love Chicago style pizza and looking over Lake Michigan from his lab as the sun came up. After four years, the time was up, and Steve got his PhD and a job in Bartlesville, Oklahoma with Phillips Petroleum.

In Bartlesville, Steve finally had some extra time to seriously take up chess, taught to him by his dad in Wellington, Kansas; computer programming (interesting in its own right); and bowling for a start. He started as an Analytical Chemist, working with coal liquids, crude oil, polymers, pheromones, sulfur chemicals, and anything the company needed to understand more. He published a number of papers and made several presentations during this time. The largest was to well over 200 scientists in New Orleans on ethylene purity. This time also began a time for travel around the United States for fun and pleasure. Surviving multiple layoffs, Steve advanced up the ladder becoming a supervisor of an analytical section, first in the spectroscopic area, then the chromatography section and finally, being part of a process analytical group who worked with analytical

instruments in the plant. During these time, EPA and FDA regulations were worked on and Steve helped out on a number of unit start ups, including a major one in Borger, Texas. It was during these later years Steve visited Norway (his first international trip, unless you were to count that band trip to Winnipeg) to the offshore oil/gas production facility Ekofisk; refineries in Sweeny and Borger, Texas; one in Salt Lake City; a polymer plant in Pasadena, Texas; gas plants in New Mexico and Oklahoma; and joined as a member of the Analytical Section of the Gas Processor's Association, eventually becoming chairman of this Section and helping to teach gas and gas liquids measurements as part of a week-long school at the University of Tulsa.

Steve still had time to take his hobbies seriously. Here he became a serious chess player, director, organizer and eventually lead the Oklahoma Affiliate to the United States Chess Federation. He cycled 20-40 miles each week and finally added scuba diving onto the list in 1993 and went to the Bahamas for his first ocean dive. With shake ups within the company, Steve renewed his commitment to Christ, joining the First United Methodist Church in Bartlesville, becoming an usher. In 1999, continued company shake ups prompted Steve to move to Chevron Phillips, a subsidiary of Phillips Petroleum, allowing him more freedom than ever before, and allowing him to focus almost exclusively on polyethylene. This allowed more focused contributions and more time for hobbies and church. His faith continued to increase and in 2004 Steve began to spend more and more time in church, joining the choir, Bible study, Sunday school, etc. after his first wife passed away from breast cancer on March 26th, 2004.

In 2005, Steve met Debbie Huggins Wharry and they were married On February 25th, 2006. Steve worked for a few more years and then retired, spending his off-hours working on various activities, including IT for the Bartlesville church, hiking mountains, learning to ski, improving at chess, working around the house, etc. His last trip to Fiji in 2016 was a scuba diving trip filled with hope and the thankfulness of all the wonders he had seen.

Memorial Services: 11:00 A.M., Monday, Aug. 8, 2016 at 1st United Methodist Church-Tulsa

Contributions may be made to 1st United Methodist Church, Tulsa: Music Ministry or Missions.

Comments



“ I remember Stephen (or Steve as we referred to him) from the Oklahoma chess events I played in during the mid-to-late 1980s and beyond. I was never paired against him, strangely, even though we were at more than ten events together. It would have been an honor to play him, although I would have likely lost! His USCF rating was about 200 points above me at the time.

I feel the loss of Steve and give the Wharry family my deepest condolences.

Mike Parker
Edmond, OK
11/8/2017

Mike Parker - November 08, 2017 at 06:08 PM



“ I know it's been awhile since Steve's passing but There have been a amazing amount of people that have passed away since Stephen!
I was totally amazed to learn about everything he was involved in,
I always enjoyed talking with Stephen whether at Church or Bible Study. Through his battle with Cancer you always see his strong side and his faith was always present, I'm sure he had doubts like of do that's only human!
I pray God has comforted his wife trough all of this because God's love is always there.

Praying for continued healing! In Christ, Steve

STEVEN SHIRCK - March 14, 2017 at 10:59 AM



“ Dear Debbie & family, Richard & wife, & Don & family....

This is what I posted on FB after Steve's service:

Funeral for Steve Wharry today. What a wonderful guy! He was the best person, best & loyal friend, best tech guy to come running to help, very generous, most adventurous person I knew! I loved him & our entire family loved him. It's hard to believe it has been 14 years since Sharon passed away. I miss her every day. She really was my best friend! A few years after her passing Steve married Debbie, who is a very nice person. I know she made Steve happy.

Rest in Peace Steve! You lived your life to the fullest, and you were a very Christian man so I know you're in Heaven!

Steve really was a great guy! As I said to some of you at his service, I never, ever heard a negative word on Steve. Not that he was perfect, as no one is. My husband once said "He's so loud!" I think it was more that he was just boisterous with excitement & enthusiasm! Needless to say it was always a fun time whether we were all bowling together, playing golf in Bartlesville & even Las Vegas once when a group of us all went out together, playing cards, hiking a little in Utah, and many other times together!

Since Steve & Sharon didn't have kids they really took ours under their wing. I think if they had had kids they still would have taken great interest in everything our kids did! Since our families were all up north and not there for a lot of "life's moments", Steve & Sharon were. Our son Shane accompanied me to the service. He shared a memory that I either didn't know or had forgotten about. It was the summer between his first & second year, and he was doing an internship with Phillips Petroleum. He enjoyed being out at the Research Center as he knew so many of the employees there. He was in Steve's office one day & noticed a framed photo of himself from a high school chess match. It had really meant a lot to him then & now that Steve thought that much of him. There are many, many more stories of how the Wharry's impacted our three kids & even us.

After Sharon passed we talked a lot! A lot! One night he called to talk about a lady he had met named Debbie. We talked many many times about her. And it was all good! He shared many emotions on moving on. He was sure he had met someone special. I know how happy he was with you Debbie. Thank God you met each other!!!

My regret is that I saw so little of Steve these last years. There were emails & some chance meetings. The last was meeting him at a restaurant in Tulsa. He was there with his Sunday School class, & we were there with some of our family. It was probably two years ago. I regret that I did not visit him this last year. I remember the night he called me to tell me he had cancer. I was in Florida at DisneyWorld with Shane & his family. We cried together over the phone. He reassured me that he would fight & win! From that night on, he has been in my prayers nightly & oftentimes randomly during the day. He has met his reward for a Christian & faithful life! That gives me peace. Rest in Peace Steve! No longer are you in pain for you are whole with Our Savior!

Many thoughts & prayers to all the family!! My husband Merl, our children Shane, Geri & Erin and their families all send our deepest sympathies in the passing of your son, husband, brother, nephew, uncle, cousin. May peace be with you. May your treasured memories some day bring you smiles in place of tears. Much love, Cheryl Lindstrom

cheryl lindstrom - August 11, 2016 at 12:54 PM



“ Dear Debbie,

Destiny and I would like to send you our deepest condolences. Steve was always such a spirited and cheerful person to be around - he had an innate ability to brighten up the room when he walked into the chess club, always telling great stories, and funny jokes.

I remember one of my first tournaments I ever attended was the Philips 66 over a decade ago, and this was the first time I actually came to know my future wife, as she was playing at the same time - we had a great game against each other and drew in a game I was clearly winning! In a way, I've always felt gratitude to Steve for holding this tournament - who knows if I would have ever met my bride?!

Steve was one of the best tournament organizers Oklahoma has ever known, and believe me that chessplayers throughout the state will miss him sorely. From what I've heard, he has had a very illustrious career, and led an extremely fulfilling life, always staying positive, even through his health battle.

It was extremely pleasant meeting with you and Steve in your home a couple of months ago, and I'm glad that we had the chance to have a good long chat. Steve was a strong believer, and we know that he is in a much better place.

Praying for strength for today, and hope for tomorrow.

Sincerely,
Anthony & Destiny Paolercio

Anthony Paolercio - August 07, 2016 at 11:15 PM



“ My favorite memories of time spent with Steve would certainly be me arriving early Saturday mornings to a coffee shop where serious chessplayers gather, and finding Steve already there with a chessboard setup. He and I shared a passion for the Sicilian Najdorf chess opening. 5-minute blitz games would ensue, we would change colors each game, and a dialogue of ideas and improvisation would occur that would often leave me wondering where several enjoyable hours had gone. He is and will be sorely missed.

Michael Nugent - August 07, 2016 at 08:02 PM



“ I am grateful to know Steve Wharry. He inspired me by fighting cancer. He supported me in Oklahoma Chess.

James Joy - August 07, 2016 at 03:29 PM



“ Steve Wharry was a man of his word. Many years ago, when he was elected President of Oklahoma's state chess affiliate, Steve promised to visit every chess club in Oklahoma. So, one Saturday I was handling registrations for a tournament in Fort Sill's Caisson Recreation Center. Well before cutoff Steve and his wife, Sharon, walked in.

It was exciting for all of us to have the State's highest ranking chess official say a few words and then play with us. He and Sharon were marvelous guests and chess ambassadors.

Farewell, Steve. You are missed.

-- Jim Hollingsworth --

Jim Hollingsworth - August 07, 2016 at 02:32 PM



“ Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant was purchased for the family of Stephen Mark Wharry.



August 07, 2016 at 12:02 AM



“ I remember playing Steve in chess at Tonkawa, Ok 1984 at the Ok State Chess Champions. It was an enjoyable time, and since then I've had the pleasure of being in several of Steve's tournaments in Bartlesville. I usually played my favorite opening, The Black-Mar Diemer, and had a plus advantage. Steve had a major impact on me and others who knew him. He will be missed, but will not be forgotten. God Bless Steve and his lovely wife Debbie. -Charlie Snap-

Charlie Snap - August 06, 2016 at 10:23 AM



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Jim Hollingsworth - August 05, 2016 at 06:58 PM