



Stephen Nichols Wakefield

March 22, 1957 - August 5, 2018

Stephen Nichols Wakefield (Steve), born 3/22/1957 in Salem, OR, passed away at home on 8/5/2018. Steve was born in Salem, OR, to M. Maxine & Rev. W. Glenn Wakefield, while Rev. Wakefield was pastoring in Hammond, OR. He was the third born, his older siblings being David and Glenda. While still a young child, Steve's parents moved the family to Woodburn, followed shortly by a move to Tulelake, CA, when he was about 4 years old. Then, in 1964 the family moved to Winner, SD. Following David and Glenda's graduation from Winner High School (and Glenda's marriage to the late Mervin Engquist) Rev. Wakefield moved the family to Milbank, SD, in 1968. Steve graduated from Milbank High School in 1975, directly followed by enlisting in the United States Coast Guard.

Steve served as Gunner's Mate, Petty Officer 3rd Class (PO3) on the U.S.C.G.C. Boutwell in Seattle, WA, and was introduced to Donita Estene Parker-Hansen in January of 1977. Six months later, Steve proposed to Donita on a pier at the harbor in Kirkland. She was so surprised that she almost dropped the engagement ring through the pier! (And of course, she said "Yes.") In September that year, Steve changed assignments to U.S.C.G. Marine Safety Office (M.S.O.) in Mobile, AL. He returned to Washington to marry Donita on 12/3/1977, then moved his bride with him to Mobile.

While assigned at M.S.O. as PO3, he grounded the U.S.S. Lexington during an on-ship inspection for an oil leak. The Lady Lexington was the flagship of its carrier group, and when Steve grounded her the admiral in charge of the carrier group came down to the bridge for a face-to-face, toe-to-toe confrontation. Steve told the admiral that he couldn't release the Lady Lex until they corrected the oil leak. The admiral demanded to speak with Steve's superior, so he called the captain he served under at M.S.O. The captain told the admiral – again – that he was grounded until they corrected the oil leak, and that he needed to do whatever Wakefield told him. The admiral spun around and fumed away, and before he hung up Steve's captain said, "I hope you're right about this, Wakefield!" Since the U.S.S. Lexington was the flagship, the entire carrier group was grounded for three days while the oil leak was repaired.

In 1979, following a leading role in cleaning up an oil spill in Mobile Bay, Steve received an honorable discharge and moved the family back to the Pacific Northwest. They settled in with Steve's parents at the family home on Cleveland Ave. in Woodburn, OR, while awaiting the birth of their first child. In February of 1980, Donita gave birth to a girl, LaTonia Michelle. In autumn of 1980, Steve was offered an apprenticeship at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS) in Bremerton, WA. In February of 1981, after moving the family to the Puget Sound area, Donita gave birth to their second daughter, LaTasha Renee. Son Anthony Michael was born in October of 1982, and daughter LaTamra Nichole was born in April of 1984.

In August of 1984, Donita and Steve moved their family to Tucson, AZ, to be closer to Donita's parents, Donna and the late James Hansen. Steve had difficulty finding a job, until an acquaintance from church offered him a position installing air conditioners and swamp coolers. After a year with that company, he was offered a job as a machinist with Hughes Aircraft. In 1987, Steve used his vacation benefits from Hughes Aircraft to move the family back to the Seattle area, this time to Gig Harbor, WA, where he continued working as a machinist at PSNS in Bremerton.

Shortly after moving back to Washington, Steve sustained a back injury while working on a submarine as PSNS. Following light duty and rehabilitation, he was released back to work. Within a few days, however, his back was injured again in the same place and Steve was placed on permanent disability. He filled his time with homeschooling his children and listening to chatter on his CB, HAM radio, and scanner.

In 1992, Steve moved his family once again, this time back to Salem, OR, to be closer to his parents as their health declined.

Under his tutelage, his children flourished in their homeschooling endeavors. They received their GED from Chemeketa Community College when they were each 16 in turn.

In September of 1997 Steve's father, Glenn, passed away. Steve and his family made an increased effort to care for his mother and perform the tasks around the house that were beyond her ability.

In 2003, Donita and Steve moved in with his mother, Maxine, so they could manage one household instead of two.

In April of 2013 his mother, Maxine, passed away.

In April of 2016, Steve wound up in the hospital for chest pains, and was discovered to have congestive heart failure (CHF). In August of 2016, following a difficult trip to Arizona for Jim's memorial service, Anthony and his family moved in to help care for Steve while Donita was at work. In April of 2017, Steve was once again hospitalized, this time for pneumonia.

In December of 2017, following months of careful planning, the Wakefield kids and grandkids "surprised" Donita and Steve for their 40th anniversary.

Unfortunately, over the next 8 months Steve's health deteriorated, with good days few and far between. On July 26, 2018, Steve returned to the hospital for pneumonia; during his stay it was also found that the diminished CHF had returned, and that there was a pocket of fluid under his right lung. Steve was released from the hospital on July 31, with the intention of placing him on a home health plan. With Steve's health in rapid decline, it was decided on August 3 to place him in Hospice. Steve's daughters were all contacted, and they each returned home quickly, so they could spend some time with him. By the evening of August 4, Steve was unresponsive. The family took shifts caring for him through the night, and spent the next day talking and reminiscing, laughing and occasionally crying. At 2:35pm on August 5, Steve breathed his last breath in this life and passed to eternity, his suffering ending and his healing complete.

Steve was preceded in death by his parents, Maxine and Glenn Wakefield; niece, Janelle Engquist; and brother-in-law, Mervin Engquist. He is survived by his wife, Donita; their four children, LaTonia (Michael), LaTasha (Nate), Anthony (Bobbiejo), and LaTamra; 12 grandkids; siblings, David (Fran) and Glenda; and nieces and nephews.

Per Steve's wishes, there will not be a formal service.

In lieu of flowers, please make contributions in Steve's memory to the Wounded Warrior Project.

Cemetery

Private Family Cemetery

WA,

Comments



“ Our thoughts and prayers to his family during this difficult time.
Cheryl Goynes and family

cheryl goynes - August 17, 2018 at 04:00 PM



“ I have a memory of Stephen when he was in Jr High or High school coming with his parents to visit us in Garfield, Wa. I think I was 10 or so, maybe a little older. He and I decided to take a walk around town and went up "School hill" and on our way back down the hill I tripped and skinned my knee pretty bad. It was bleeding and Stephen ripped off a piece of the shirt he was wearing to put on my wound and then gave me a piggy back ride all the way home. He had such a sweet spirit and a big heart. I'm sorry for your loss and pray for comfort and peace. Love and Hugs cousins!

LaRie Buell - August 17, 2018 at 12:11 PM



“ I will miss you Little Brother. We have lived miles apart for many years but I prayed for you every day and always looked forward to seeing you when we got together. I am glad I moved back to Oregon in time to spend a little time with you before God called you home. You were very protective of me in any circumstance we would face. You are in no more pain and setting at the feet of Jesus and are with Momma and Daddy and our brother Donald and my dear Husband and Daughter. I will love you forever.

SIs

Glenda Engquist (Wakefield) - August 17, 2018 at 11:48 AM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Glenda Engquist (Wakefield) - August 17, 2018 at 11:43 AM



“ We are so sorry for your loss, I still rememer Stephen from Winner as a little boy. We were looking forward to seeing him at the Buell cousins reunion. May God be with you and comfort you at this time. Loe and prayers, Joe and Donnell

Donnell J Torgerson - August 17, 2018 at 10:02 AM