

In Memoriam



George Stephen Crane

George Stephen (“Steve”) Crane modeled an approach to life built upon vitality, courage and a determination to achieve the impossible. Born September 18, 1941 in Montclair, New Jersey to Paul Willard and Verona Harman Crane, Steve grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, his father’s home town. He graduated from Walnut Hills High School, and went on to attend Princeton, where he made lifelong friends, especially his roommates of the “231 Club”. At Princeton, he was a member of the Glee Club, the swimming team, and the Undergraduate Council. He transferred to and graduated from Stanford University in 1965, then attended graduate school in Washington D.C. at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

From an early age, Steve had the courage and drive to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. In 1954, when he was 13 years old, an athlete who loved playing baseball, swimming and riding horses, Steve was stricken with polio, which permanently limited the use of his left leg. Despite being told that he might never walk again, Steve went on to live as full and active a life as possible. No activity gave him more pleasure or peace than sailing; being on the water gave him incredible joy. He also waterskied, biked, rode horses, hiked and travelled the world. Famously one year on vacation, he walked down to the bottom of the Grand Canyon and back up when he was told he was too handicapped to be allowed to ride a mule. Later in life, despite being mostly wheelchair bound, he stood up to walk his daughter down the aisle and dance at her wedding.

Steve loved to work and was passionate about international relations and business development. From graduation through the mid-1980s, he worked for National Cash Register (Dayton, OH), Weyerhaeuser (Federal Way, WA), Continental Can Inc. (New York, NY), American Field Service (New York, NY) and the Washington State administration of Governor John Spellman.

In 1988, Steve then founded his own international relations consulting business, Crane International. His dedication to social causes, especially health issues that affect global and underserved populations, is the hallmark of the remainder of his career. As a consultant and as an active member of the Seattle Rotary, he made contributions to the post-war redevelopment of South Vietnam and to the funding of Stove Team International (Eugene, OR) providing safe and fuel-efficient cook stoves to half a million people in Central America. His signature issue was to end polio once and for all. He joined Rotary International's mission to eradicate polio. At his death, he was working with Rotary International and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on their partnership initiative to eradicate Malaria worldwide.

Alongside his strong work ethic was a deep appreciation for finding moments to slow down and focus on spending time with those he loved. One of his favorite places in the world was the family cottage, built by his father and grandfather on Crystal Lake (Frankfort, MI). He was a member of the Congregational Summer Assembly, where he loved to attend their community worship services and summer operettas. The cottage was a place he especially loved to spend time with his parents, brothers, children and friends, and of course sail and swim.

He was a caring and attentive son, seeing his parents through their later years with kindness, attention and patience, and he loved his three brothers. He was a best friend. All his friends were very important to him and he treasured them. As a father, he was unwavering in his love and outlook for his children. He never missed a baseball game or performance if he could possibly help it and encouraged his children to dream for themselves as big as he did for them.

Steve was married and divorced twice, first to Mary Harris in 1968, with whom he had a daughter (Elizabeth), and then to Diana Chapman in 1986, with whom he had a daughter (Sarah) and son (Paul).

Steve leaves behind a worldwide community that loved and appreciated him. He consistently expressed his love for those around him through encouragement to turn dreams into reality – he was everyone's biggest fan. He was often the first to plan a gathering for friends and family, a trip to visit friends or family who lived farther away, or a reunion of roommates. We will miss his love, courage and booming laugh.

Steve died peacefully in his sleep at home on June 27, 2019. Steve was predeceased by his parents, and his elder brother, William. He is survived by daughters Elizabeth (Paul) Fleming (Seattle, WA) and Sarah Crane (Avery Swanson) (Notre Dame, IN), son Paul (Katie) Crane (San Diego, CA) and granddaughters Frances and Charlotte Fleming (Seattle, WA). He is also survived by brothers Bradford (Anabel) and Robert Crane.

A memorial service will be held in Seattle on January 5, 2020, in recognition of Steve's love of the holidays and family tradition of 12th night.

In lieu of flowers, please send donations in memory of Steve Crane to End Polio, Rotary's partnership to eradicate polio or to Rotarian Malaria Partners, Rotary's partnership to eradicate malaria.