



Stephen Douglas Gray, Lt Col (ret.)

October 7, 1948 - October 2, 2019

Stephen Douglas Gray, Lt Col (ret.), USAF, passed away Wednesday, October 2, 2019, at the age of 70, after a courageous battle with cholangiocarcinoma. He was born October 7, 1948, in Evanston, Illinois, to Rollin Lester Gray and Barbara Rodelius Gray, and grew up in Glenview, Illinois. He graduated from Glenbrook High School, Glenview, Illinois, in 1966, and from Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1970. He was a member of Phi Kappa Tau Fraternity and the basketball and football teams. Following graduation, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant into the United States Air Force where he served for 24 years. During this time, he married Sharon Jane Lawrence (in 1975), daughter of an Air Force Pilot, and they raised one daughter, Heather Elizabeth Gray (Walk), born in 1979, who followed in her father's footsteps as a USAF Officer.

Steve's Air Force career included serving as an Air Controller in Vietnam and later, Squadron Commander, Advisor, Staff Officer and Director. As a weapons controller on the EC-121 Constellation Early Warning Aircraft he was assigned in Panama, California and Iceland. Steve served as Director of the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Program at the Pentagon and was the Air National Guard Advisor to the Commander in Chief, United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE) while stationed in Germany. His military awards included the Bronze Star Medal, Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, Vietnam Armed Forces Service Medal First Class, Air Force Commendation Medal, First Oak Leaf Cluster, Meritorious Service Medal, First Oak Leaf Cluster and the US Air Force Master Weapons Controllers Badge.

After retirement from the US Air Force in 1994, Steve became the Military Advisor for then Congressman (now Arkansas Governor) Asa Hutchinson. Steve then went to work for Congressman (now Senator) John Boozman as the Senior Military and Veterans Advisor. During this time, his most rewarding accomplishment was the presentation of medals in special ceremonies that Senator Boozman's office conducted throughout the state to honor Arkansas veterans for their military service. He conducted close to one thousand ceremonies and personalized each one for the respective veteran's military service.

Steve retired from Senator Boozman's office in January 2015. However, he did not stop serving or working to assist Arkansas Veterans or his local community. He volunteered his time with civic and Veterans Service Organizations including Lions Club (past President), Fayetteville Exchange Club, American Legion (past Commander, American Legion Post 27, and Vice-Commander, American Legion, Department of Arkansas), Veterans of Foreign Wars, Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce, Fayetteville Autumnfest Committee, NWA Veterans Day Association (Chairman and organizer of the annual Veterans Day Parades), Singing Men of Arkansas, Veterans Healthcare System of the Ozarks, Military Officers Association of America and the Fayetteville National Cemetery Advisory Council (where he served as its first Chairman and organizer of the Annual Memorial Day Ceremony). He also volunteered with Hospice of North Arkansas and the Walton Arts Center.

In October 2018, Steve was inducted into the Arkansas Military Veterans' Hall of Fame. In September 2019, Mayor of the City of Fayetteville, Lioneld Jordan, proclaimed October 7, 2019, to be "Stephen Gray Day" in honor of his contributions to Veterans and his advocacy for the needs of service members across the state along with his tireless community service.

For all of his achievements, Steve was truly the happiest spending time with his family, traveling, sailing, camping, playing guitar, singing (mostly John Denver songs), cheering for his beloved Chicago Cubs (ecstatic when they finally won a World Series in 2016) and rooting on the Razorbacks.

Steve is survived by Sharon, his wife of almost 44 years; their daughter, Heather (son-in-law, Vic Walk, Lt Col, USAF) of Washington, D.C.; three sisters, Diane Kip Gray Herbst of Tooele, Utah, Jacquelyn Gray Harwood (Gerald) of Park City, Utah, and Pamela Jeanne Gray Burns (Joseph) of Idaho Falls, Idaho; one brother, Preston Bradley Gray (Dianne) of Minneapolis, Minnesota; two brothers-in-law, David Lawrence and Paul Lawrence, Jr. (Anita); two sisters-in-law, Vicki Clark (Ron) and Mary Beth Donahue (Kelly); nineteen nieces and nephews; and numerous great-nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be held at 10:30am on Friday, October 18, 2019, at University Baptist Church in Fayetteville. Interment will follow with full military honors at the Fayetteville National Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation at <https://cholangiocarcinoma.org/> or mailing it to 5526 West 13400 South #510, Herriman, Utah 84096, the Fayetteville National Cemetery Advisory Council at 3055 N. Quartz Drive, Fayetteville, AR 72704, the Lions Club at <https://e->

clubhouse.org/sites/fayettevillear/ or the Northwest Arkansas Veterans Coalition at
<https://www.facebook.com/nwaveterancoalition/>

Cemetery

Fayetteville National Cemetery

700 Government Avenue

Fayetteville, AR,

Events

OCT

18

Funeral service

10:30AM

University Baptist Church

333 W Maple St, Fayetteville, AR, US, 72701

Comments



“ An external video has been added.



Nelson Berna Funeral Home - October 14, 2019 at 10:26 AM



“ Stephen Gray was a great man with an enormous heart. A man that displayed strength in his spiritual, moral, and political convictions. He had a smile and a sense of humor that always made you feel relaxed. Gonna miss you man!

Vincent - October 17, 2019 at 10:21 AM



“ So sorry for your loss. Just thinking about Steve brings back some great memories from the past. I enjoyed working and playing with him when he was in Sandy, Utah. He was always a good friend to me.

Michael Brown - October 25, 2019 at 02:32 PM



“ Sincere condolences to the entire immediate and extended family of Steve Gray. My most memorable association with Steve was when we observed his friendly and historically informative narration of the Fayetteville Square Veterans Day Parade for several years even before the current emphases on behalf of deserving and sometimes overlooked veterans in NWA and the entire nation. As a volunteer for veterans myself, I observed firsthand the incredible energy and foresight Steve devoted to veterans' and other causes in AR. Our family had another pleasant life crossing with Steve via our daughter who went to Fayetteville High School with his daughter, Heather.

We are all better, inspired, and fulfilled to have known Steve and his family. We humbly share our respects and memories at the passing of such a strong, determined, moral, and exemplary American family man.

The Blankenship Family of Fayetteville, AR

David Blankenship - October 19, 2019 at 08:38 AM



“ Being new to Fayetteville, Arkansas. One of my fondest memory will be meeting Mr. Gray. He has always been kind and welcoming to me. I appreciated our conversation and admired his passion for service. Especially to his fellow Veterans.

I am so happy to have known Mr. Gray and I am better person for knowing him. My condolences to the family and to the community. His loss will be felt by so many for a long time.

My thoughts and prayers are with the family.

James Shulfer - October 18, 2019 at 08:49 AM



“ Sharon and Heather: My sincere condolences to you for the loss of your husband and father. Steve was an honorable man, and highly respected by those of us who knew him and had the opportunity to work with him. He was a true servant leader, and the impact of his work on behalf of Veterans will continue to be felt for years to come. You will be missed, brother. Rest in His Peace.

Michael Winn - October 17, 2019 at 12:45 PM



“ My deepest sympathy and condolences to Steve's precious family. I had the pleasure of meeting Steve while he served as Military Liaison for both then Congressmen Asa Hutchinson and John Boozman. During the many trips to DC to visit with his bosses Steve was always enthusiastic, kind, concerned and genuine. He became a great friend and acquaintance over the years. I am so very sorry I did not know of his illness. There is a deep void in my soul with knowing that Steve is gone. However, there is gladness in knowing that someday we will be able to rejoice in seeing his 'killer' smile again in heaven. May God richly bless all of Steve's family. Ron Snead (COL. US Army Retired).

Ron Snead - October 17, 2019 at 12:25 PM



“ Blue & White Sympathy Standing Basket was purchased for the family of Stephen Douglas Gray, Lt Col (ret.).



October 17, 2019 at 10:08 AM



“ Healing Tears - All White was purchased for the family of Stephen Douglas Gray, Lt Col (ret.).



October 17, 2019 at 08:33 AM



“ Love, Clark and Shelley Davis and Family purchased the Peace, Prayers & Blessings - Blue and White for the family of Stephen Douglas Gray, Lt Col (ret.).



Love, Clark and Shelley Davis and Family - October 16, 2019 at 01:26 AM



“ As the congressional liaison for a VA Medical Center, I had the great honor to work with Steve on many occasions. His tireless work on the veterans' behalf was awe inspiring. He had a wonderful sense of humor and was just great fun to work with. Steve's efforts on the behalf of our veteran population will sorely be missed. My sincerest condolences to his family. May you be comforted knowing he touched so many lives. God Bless.



Carol Bishop - October 15, 2019 at 03:11 PM



“ Our family is sad to learn of Sam passing. Dad, Jim Oden, is currently in the Rehab hospital in Springdale and mentioned he is honored to have been presented recognition for his (Dad's) service by Sam when he worked for the Congressman. Please accept our condolences and prayers during this time.

Jim and Rae Oden
Michele Abernathy, daughter

Rae Oden - October 15, 2019 at 12:46 PM



“ We have a wonderful memory of Steve and Sharon coming to our home for a small gathering where Steve presented Norman his medals that he had earned in Vietnam but never received. We know that Steve worked tirelessly for veterans and are so grateful for the service he gave to our country. Even though we did not see Steve much except in passing or maybe at the gym, he was one of the kindest, nicest people we have known. Sharon and Heather our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Norman and Cheryl McNeil

Cheryl McNeil - October 13, 2019 at 11:10 AM



“ Robert Staats sent a virtual gift in memory of Stephen Douglas Gray, Lt Col (ret.)



Robert Staats - October 10, 2019 at 07:58 AM



“ Robert Staats lit a candle in memory of Stephen Douglas Gray, Lt Col (ret.)



Robert Staats - October 10, 2019 at 07:47 AM



“ I am so sorry to hear of Steve's passing, seems much too soon for such a lively, funny, dedicated man who shined his light brightly. I will never forget him as our recreational softball coach in High school after he retired from his distinguished military career or attending UBC Wednesday night dinners when he always had a

story to tell with a glint of mischievousness in his eyes or his singing with the northwest Arkansas singing mans choir. I'm very grateful that years later my professional career crossed paths with his right before he retired again. My deepest sympathies and condolences to Sharon and Heather as you go on this new journey and celebrate his life.

melanie sabik - October 09, 2019 at 09:29 PM



“ My deep condolences Steve family and Friends my thoughts and prayers are with you, the Lord knows your hearts are aching may he hold you closely to his heart and comfort you tenderly.

Sophie Kiunga from Kenya. - October 09, 2019 at 05:48 PM



“ I remember when he came to the VA for a meeting and he got stuck in the elevator. The meeting went on with Steve in the elevator. He will be missed by many especially by our veteran community.
Becky O'Connell

Becky O'Connell - October 09, 2019 at 10:35 AM



“ Carolyn Crabtree Daniels lit a candle in memory of Stephen Douglas Gray, Lt Col (ret.)



Carolyn Crabtree Daniels - October 08, 2019 at 06:17 PM



“ Healing Tears - Blue and White was purchased for the family of Stephen Douglas Gray, Lt Col (ret.).





“ Sharon & Heather—we are so sorry for your loss. I know how much he loved you and all the family—especially Brian, Leslie and the girls. He will be missed by so many. Praying for comfort for everyone.
Nicci & Edd Richardson

Nicci Richardson - October 07, 2019 at 01:45 PM



“ Steve Gray loved serving others. I am glad to have known him in my role as VA Director. He will be missed. Peace be with those who loved him.

Lisa Breun - October 07, 2019 at 08:23 AM



“ Steve and I were stationed in the 552nd in California. I do not remember much about him because I was a Navigator and he was a Controller. But many years later, my wife and I attended a 552nd and I met him and we chatted about many things, But, what I remember most was his smile. It was warm and honest. If you were to take the photo of him and darken the hair, it is the same Steve that I met at the reunion with the same smile. My condolences to his family.

Bill Koch - October 06, 2019 at 09:30 PM



“ Fond memories of serving with Steve on EC-121s out of McClellan AFB, CA and Korat RTAFB, Thailand. Another friend lost too soon. Rest peacefully, old buddy.

Mike Scott - October 06, 2019 at 02:33 PM



“ I omitted Keflavik NAS, Iceland. How could I forget?

Mike Scott - October 06, 2019 at 02:33 PM



“ It's difficult to say good bye to a true friend and Steve was a true friend of mine and many others. He will be missed. As we in the US Navy Submarine Service say, Steve is now on Eternal Patrol - a new mission for this fine gentleman. Fair skies and following seas, Steve.



Pete Rathmell - October 06, 2019 at 08:43 AM



“ Thank you Officer Gray for being a beacon of light in ARKANSAS. Our State and country are better because of your heart commitment to serve. Bless your family and thank you for your friendship over the years. Sing loud and strong as we carry on!
JOSEPH & JUNE WOOD



JOSEPH K. WOOD - October 05, 2019 at 11:37 PM



“ Please accept my sincere sympathies to all that morn col Gray. We met during a veteran motorcycle event in Springdale quite a few years ago. Col Gray noticed a “wing)” patch on my leather vest, from the 552nd AEW&C wing, as I was also a member of that organization in the early to mid 70’s, working with 5he EC-121 aircrafts. Chances are we most probably crossed paths once or twice back then. We had a good visit, he was a really nice gentleman. God Bless, Rest In Peace, fly high.

Dinnis Holmes - October 05, 2019 at 11:00 PM



“ Today, October the 5th I logged onto my Facebook page, and there was a memory from 9 years ago when Steve and I became Fb friends. My login photo is a picture of me, Steve, and his wife, Sharon at North Branch after the homecoming football game of our 50th class reunion. I put a comment out there that anyone that new both of us knew we were both cut from the same piece of cloth and shared it to all my Fb friends!

Ted Brown

Ted Brown - October 05, 2019 at 10:51 PM



“ I had the pleasure of working with Steve when I handled public affairs for ADVA. He worked harder than anyone I knew to advocate on behalf of military members, veterans and their families. He managed to be everywhere at once and always with a smile on his face. Steve devoted his life to serving this nation and later its heroes. He was a patriot and a fine gentleman. I'm sorry for your loss. May you find God's comfort during this time of grief. My sincerest condolences, Kendall Thornton

Kendall Thornton - October 05, 2019 at 10:13 PM



“ Heather - I so enjoyed meeting and talking to your dad this past August. I could tell he was a special man! I had hopes that he would come back again to Indiana as I looked forward to more conversations. I am so sorry for your loss.

Peggy Paulin

Peggy Paulin - October 05, 2019 at 09:54 PM