



Stevan J. VanWestenburg

December 8, 1953 - May 24, 2025

Stevan J. VanWestenburg, age 71, passed away unexpectedly May 24, 2025. He was born December 8, 1953 in Hancock, Michigan to John A. and Joyce E. (Timmer) VanWestenburg. Steve is survived by his wife, Liz; his father John; three sisters, Laura (Pete Simmons) Palmer, Glenna (Tom) Sprague and Claire (Steve) Murchie, and his nephew Dale (Heather) Sprague. He was predeceased by his mother, Joyce, his grandparents and his aunt.

After growing up in Houghton, in the Upper Peninsula, the family moved to Midland, Michigan. There Steve met Liz during their junior year of high school. He claimed it was love at first sight. After graduating from H.H. Dow High School in Midland in 1971, he earned his degree at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He and Liz were married in August of 1974. After living in Ann Arbor for six years, they moved to Canton, Michigan. They made their home there until 2010 but spent summers up north.

Steve spent most of his working years as a science teacher in Livonia Public Schools, teaching primarily Chemistry and Biology. He taught at Franklin High School, Churchill High School and then moved to Stevenson High School. He finished his career at Churchill. He loved instructing students, helping them understand and appreciate science and working with the other staff. He retired in 2010, and he and Liz began spending much of their time at their home on the lake in Kalkaska, Michigan. It was the perfect place for summer and winter

recreation: boating and swimming, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling, and they made many wonderful friends. Steve loved the outdoors, and spent time fishing, hunting, walking in the woods, and traveling with Liz in their motorhome. They attended many “Barth” (the make of their motorhome) get-togethers across the country and visited Barth friends in Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, Ohio and Minnesota. They eventually found a winter home near Port Charlotte, Florida. After living in Michigan for so long, Steve was ready to leave snow behind for the warmth and sunshine of Florida. He said he had had enough practice shoveling snow! At the RV park, Steve enjoyed making breakfasts for a crowd. People often found him at the outdoor kitchen grill, flipping pancakes or French toast and scrambling eggs. He had many terrific friends there and always offered to help with holiday meals and parties, repair a water heater or troubleshoot an electrical issue.

He had so many different interests and skills. His father taught him so much, Steve could fix or engineer and build almost anything. He loved reading and researching, spending time with friends and family and helping other people. He was friends with everyone he met, and always offered to help with any project, big or small. He wrote detailed technical postings on Barthmobile.com, explaining how to replace an engine, fix a generator, a transmission, or a plumbing issue. He was a pretty accomplished engine mechanic, built unique folding bicycles from parts, repaired circuit boards and could fix anything around the house or in RVs. He was a pilot and flew his Cessna 172 back and forth from Canton to Kalkaska, making over one hundred round trips. Steve boated Lake Superior with his father, making many trips to Isle Royale National Park. He loved fireworks and gave quite a show on Log Lake each 4th of July. His conversations and discussions were often long and full of detail, but he knew almost everything about almost everything. The only really troublesome Jeopardy categories for him were “Opera” and “Sports”!

Steve shared kind words and encouragement with others, and he was a mentor to many. He was an honorable, kindhearted man with a great sense of humor. Steve loved his family and kept them close to his heart, and he counted many people as friends.

We will have a casual neighborhood gathering on July 5 and a private family celebration of Steve's life in Chassell, Michigan, later in the summer.

Please visit www.kalkaskafuneralhome.com to visit Steve's tribute page and share a memory with his family. Memorial contributions may be made to The Friends of the Kalkaska County Library, Kalkaska Area Interfaith Resources and the Gift of Life Michigan. All may be found online and offer online donations.

Tribute Wall

MA

“ I am so sad to hear of V-Dub's passing. I was thinking about him today and decided to look him up; I'm sorry to know he's gone. He was my chemistry teacher at Churchill in the late aughts, and although chem was a subject that I struggled with he did such an amazing job of making his classes fun and engaging that I looked forward to his class every day. I don't know if I'd have passed chem without him. It's a rare high school teacher that manages to stand out from the crowd so much that you still think of them fondly very nearly 20 years later, and V-Dubs was rare indeed. His random stories, goofy sense of humor, and above all his kindness will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Marie - January 22 at 03:04 PM

MB

“ I loved Mr. VeeDub's class. Always made class exciting and interesting. He was the best!! Never fall asleep in class, he'd find a creative way to wake you up :) You will be missed!

Melissa Backus Beale - June 14, 2025 at 08:41 PM

SB

“ I taught at Stevenson in Social Studies but remember Steve as one of really caring science teachers in that department which says a lot because when I was at Stevenson the Science folks were among the very best teachers I've known.

Skip Blunt - June 11, 2025 at 11:43 AM

SC

“ *Mr. VeeDub was my quiz bowl coach, and he was one of the kindest, most caring, and most positive teachers I have ever had. His legacy lives on in all of the lives he touched. He will be missed.*

Sara C - June 10, 2025 at 11:45 PM

CW

“ *Great, kind teacher who I took a few classes with. Super friendly and made me copies of post-Jim Morrisson tapes more than once. He'll be missed.*

Craig Wishart - June 10, 2025 at 07:40 PM

CG

“ *If you knew Steve, then you know he was a talker. Never a dull moment with him around. As a new hire at SHS, my classroom was across the hall from his. He always had a story, anecdote or word of encouragement for the newbie (me 😊). He left SHS to finish his last decade of teaching at CHS. As fate would have it, I was placed at CHS for two years...again across the hall from his room. He generously helped me acclimate to my new school again.*

Despite the age gap, I became relatively close with him and Liz. Steve took me up in his Cessna twice, and gave me his extra cabin on Log Lake to enjoy on three different occasions. Stevan, was a generous man.

He lived a full life. I am thankful for the memories and friendship.

Christopher Gord - June 10, 2025 at 07:11 PM

TJ

“ I had the honor and privilege to be Mr. VanWestenburg’s Student Assistant for three semesters between 1995-1996.

He was a huge influence in my high school years and I learned plenty from him as I would consider him a mentor. He had such a passion for teaching and a way to explain things in a fashion that made difficult concepts easy to grasp. I recall wanting to do well in his class so that he wasn’t disappointed in me because I felt that he saw my potential when so many others did not.

One aspect that I still have to this day is the way to find something bright (or funny) in any/all situations.

The world lost a good one way too early. Rest in peace Mr. VW’s. I wish I could have had a chance to catch up with you before you went to be with God. Rest in peace.

- Tim Jankowski

Tim Jankowski - June 10, 2025 at 03:10 PM

DM

“ I remember Steve’s friendliness, humor and helpfulness. We worked together at Stevenson. He was a wonderful man.

Donna Mulder - June 10, 2025 at 09:53 AM



“ *Mr. VanWestenburg was one of the kindest, caring and most sincere teachers I ever had at Stevenson High School (class of 1994). He always had the time to help, laugh, and share stories and experiences with his students. He is one of the teachers that left a mark in my heart and soul that helped me make the decision to become a teacher as well. God keep you Mr. VW. and may you soar with the angles.*

- John Strzempka

John Strzempka - June 10, 2025 at 09:51 AM

SS

“ My lifetime friend □

Today May 24th 2025, my dear, friend Steve VanWestenburg, was called home to be with Our Lord Jesus Christ. 🙏

Liz, the most precious person in his life; is a woman of strong convictions, and his ongoing strength! Someone with whom Steve decided in Highschool; through Devine intervention from God, that this most beautiful young woman was without adoubt definitely the one he was asking to marry him! She was the single most important person in his life! She was, and always would be the most complete, compassionate, caring, kind and total love of his life! The verbiage used to describe she by Steve , and she about he!

Steve, was a man's, man! While he was extremely intelligent, he was also very humble. The needs of his wife, family, friends, and including many who didn't know him, nor ever would, benefited from the generosity not only he, but also his lovely wife of 47 years "Liz" VanWestenburg.

As I look back over our nearly nine year friendship. I could have never deliberately gone out and found a better friend! Many an evening he, I, occasionally "Liz, and my 89 year old Mom (who talked to, and thought of Stevan & Liz not only as friends; but Family) would sit and talk about everything, yet nothing! Solving all of the world's problems, yet not!

He as an Independent Democrat and I as an Independent Republican found many a time we would agree to disagree, intermittently find common ground, and always joke with each other on our political afflictions. Oops, I meant affiliations! We would share many stories of our child hoods; from growing up, to the antics we had pulled in our adolescence, and adulthood. 🤝 This barely scratches the surface of our short nine year friendship, which seemed like a lifetime! I and my Mom, will miss him terribly, as will

many! However, none more than his lovely wife, "Liz," their Felidae son, "Charlie," and Steve's loving Father! This of course does not leave out his siblings. May the three of them along with Family and Friends, find peace as God wraps his loving arms around them; protecting and giving them strength during this, their time of grieving.

*Take care of him God!
(He's one of your best)! ❤️*

Scott Streeter - June 05, 2025 at 01:32 AM

HG

“ 1 file added to the album Camp-Sok-it-Tuer



Harry Greanya - June 01, 2025 at 09:23 PM

DS

*We are blessed to call Steve & Liz our next-door neighbors for many many years. It was always exciting to know they were coming home from their Florida Winter home, and back home to enjoy Summers at Log Lake. Steve married Bernard & me in 2022, and will always be special in our hearts. We pray that Liz be comforted and know she has us beside her for anything. We are blessed!
Debbie & Bernard Seeley 🌸*

Debbie & Bernard Seeley - July 01, 2025 at 08:59 PM

HG

“ Steve had wide ranging eclectic interests & a depth of knowledge that was impressive and that he liked to share.....at length. We shared an interest in things mechanical and cars. He was never effusive in his praise but demonstrated his confidence in my abilities by asking for my help. He asked me to help dismantle his precious airplane after tornado damage and we also worked well together to modify my motorhome eventhough we both preferred working alone. Gonna miss him. Harry

Harry Greanya - June 01, 2025 at 08:48 PM

RA

“ Here at Oak Haven, I know I speak for all of us that knew Steve. We were all so shocked and saddened by the news. I didn't get the chance to know him for a long time, but from the beginning helping with breakfasts, it was so apparent what great people you and Steve were and are! My heart is so hurt for you because the love and closeness between the two of you was so apparent. May your memories and love help keep you strong and give you some semblance of peace ❤️💔🙏

RAMONA - May 31, 2025 at 07:30 PM

KM

“ Steve helped me numerous times with my trailer at our park where he was my neighbor. He not only repaired my water heater and saved my electric, he explained to me what was happening and why and how to repair it. Not that I could fix it myself, so that I could understand it and explain the issue to someone else if he wasn't around to help. He never let me reimburse him for it either. I always hated to see you both leave at the end os season, but was thrilled when I saw you pull in in the fall. I will miss him loads.

Kari Maass - May 31, 2025 at 06:47 AM

DC

“ I consider myself lucky to have called Steve (& Liz) dear friends. They visited my home many times in Georgia, stopping for a few days when traveling between MI & FL. I cherish those visits! Steve occasionally helped my husband, Nick, work on our motorhome when visiting, as well as helping him & others while at get-togethers in RV parks. Someone always had a motorhome that needed a part or a repair...and there was Steve! He never said “no”, to anyone & always acted eager to lend a helping hand. He & Liz also helped empty out my motorhome & cooked dinner for me & Nick on another visit when I desperately needed help. Lastly, Steve & Liz made a special trip last month to GA, to visit & check on me after my husband’s death a year ago before their return to MI. What a special friend! Love & miss you, Steve. RIP

Donna Cagle - May 30, 2025 at 03:58 PM

AJ

“ Al Jordan lit a candle in memory of Stevan VanWestenburg



Al Jordan - May 28, 2025 at 08:31 AM

EL

“ Liz, I am your neighbor Debbie’s Mama. My heart and prayers go out to you. May God send you comfort at this time. Know Deb is there for you if you need anything.

EllenFogel - May 27, 2025 at 05:48 PM