



Eric Lee Stechmann

December 25, 1947 - April 8, 2011

Eric Lee Stechmann of Shoreview, MN died peacefully on April 8th, 2011 at Our Lady of Good Counsel Home in St. Paul, MN with family and friends at his side. He was 63, and his passing marked the end of a courageous battle with brain cancer. Eric was preceded in death by his father Reginald Stechmann, his mother Helen Lorna Wheeler, his stepfather Durward Wheeler, and his infant daughter Annika Marie Stechmann. He is survived by his wife Kathleen Stechmann (Shoreview, MN), his son David Stechmann (Seattle, WA), his brother Miles (Jessica) Wheeler (Philip, SD), and many other relatives and friends. Eric was born on December 25, 1947 in Mitchell, SD to Helen Lorna Stechmann and Reginald Stechmann (both graduates of Dakota Wesleyan University). Eric spent the first few years of his life moving between Mitchell, Leadville, CO, and eventually Mankato, MN where his father died from polio in 1951. Eric and his mother later settled on a ranch outside of Philip, SD after Lorna married Durward Wheeler in 1957. While living in Philip, Eric attended Philip elementary school and later Philip High School where he demonstrated interest and aptitude for mathematics and science. He graduated valedictorian from Philip High School in 1965 and chose to pursue an electrical engineering degree at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City, SD. During his undergraduate studies, Eric acted as a resident hall advisor and student mentor. He was also elected to the presidency of several organizations including Eta Kappa Nu, Sigma Tau, and the student chapter of IEEE. During this time, Eric met Kathleen Marie Kutcher - a fellow resident

advisor and Rapid City native who was pursuing a bachelor's degree in mathematics. The two fell in love and were married on December 29, 1969. Eric completed his bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering in May, 1970 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army. He was able to remain at the School of Mines for two more years teaching undergraduate computer programming classes while conducting research into computer circuit simulation software. In 1972, he received a master's degree in electrical engineering and then entered active duty at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Eric spent the next six years as a member of the US Army Reserve, being honorably discharged in 1978 with rank of Captain. Following his active service with the Army, Eric joined Texas Instruments in Dallas, TX as an electrical engineer. He later moved to Control Data Corporation in St. Paul, MN where he conducted research into next-generation computer programming languages and computer-aided circuit design tools. After Control Data, Eric spent several years at Zycad and Provis Corporation developing software interfaces for logic and fault simulation hardware. From 1988 to 1991, he also extended commercial circuit analysis software while working at Mentor Graphics in Portland, OR before returning to St. Paul. Eric and Kathy welcomed the birth of their second child, David Stechmann on June 11, 1984 in St. Paul, MN. David's birth followed the death of their infant daughter Annika one year earlier. In 1999, Eric shifted his engineering career focus toward embedded control systems and joined Advanced Respiratory, Inc. There, he acted as lead designer for the operating system employed by "The Vest" - the company's primary medical product. He was awarded a US patent for his control system design in 2006. Once in production, The Vest became a life-saving technology for patients suffering from serious respiratory ailments - a fact that made this work especially rewarding to him. Eric continued to develop embedded control systems over the following decade for safety equipment produced by Sensonix and Banner Engineering. He left Banner Engineering in mid-2010 following his cancer diagnosis to spend time with his family and friends. Throughout Eric's engineering career, he continued to

enjoy many diverse pursuits outside of work. He enjoyed taking care of the yard and garden as well as drawing, painting, woodcarving, and collecting old computers. He was an avid supporter of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology and engineering education in general. He was a frequent blood donor who provided many gallons to the Red Cross during his lifetime. He always enjoyed helping his son with homework or helping his wife with paper-grading when needed, and he continuously performed countless tasks around the home that made life easier for everyone. Later in life as a recovering alcoholic, he found meaning in helping others face challenges with addiction. Through every experience, event, and interest, he maintained a sharp wit that brought many a smile to those around him. Even in the final months while facing aggressive brain cancer, he worked to assist and comfort his family and friends by word and deed until he was physically unable to do so. He touched many lives in his lifetime, and he will be deeply missed by those fortunate enough to know him as husband, father, brother, uncle, cousin, nephew, colleague, friend, and mentor. Funeral services will be held at 11AM Saturday, April 23, 2011 at the Holcomb-Henry-Boom-Purcell Funeral Home in Shoreview, MN (515 Highway 96 West at Mackubin). Visitation will be from 4PM to 8PM on Friday, April 22 and again from 10AM to 11AM on Saturday, April 23. In lieu of flowers or other considerations, donations can be made to the Eric L Stechmann Memorial Scholarship at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. Information regarding this endowed scholarship can be accessed at <http://foundation.sdsmt.edu/Page.aspx?pid=9>

Tribute Wall

AP

“ *My sympathies and thoughts are with you all this upcoming weekend, even though I'm unable to attend. Eric was a dear friend of 45 years, and I always treasured time with him.*

The Easter lilies on our church altar this Easter will have one just for him, now and always.

Love, Ann Parkhill

Ann Parkhill - April 19, 2011 at 12:00 AM

MA

“ *Fondly remember Eric as a "Wing Ding" during my time at Tech. Always a joyful and smiling fellow and one who made all feel welcome.*

My Sympathies to Kathy and the family;

Mike Alley

Mike Alley - April 18, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DK

“ *Very sorry for your loss.*

Dennis Krause - April 17, 2011 at 12:00 AM