

Wren, Stephen Joe

December 31, 1948 — October 26, 2024

Decatur

Stephen Wren, 75, passed away on October 26, 2024 after a battle with Parkinson's Disease. Following a private graveside service, a Celebration of Life will be held at 1:00 pm on Wednesday October 30, 2024 at First Baptist Church in Decatur, Texas. The family will visit with guests Tuesday October 29, 2024 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm, also at First Baptist Church.

Born on December 31, 1948 to Ralph and Auralia Penney Wren in Fort Worth, Texas, Stephen lived his entire life in Decatur, Texas except during his years at college and law school. Stephen graduated from Decatur High School in 1967, Texas Tech University in 1971, and Texas Tech University School of Law in 1974. He married his high school sweetheart, LaDonna Jo Forman, on July 22, 1972. During the next 52 years, they built a wonderful life together, and Stephen cherished every moment of it.

After law school, Stephen returned to Decatur and joined W.B. Woodruff's law firm. During the next few decades and through the various iterations of the law firm Woodruff, Fostel, Wren & Simpson, he had the privilege of practicing law with many of the county's best attorneys, including Mr. Woodruff, John Fostel, Mike and Ross Simpson, Mason Woodruff, Melton Cude, Dana Manoushagian, Derrick Boyd, and Stephen's daughter-in-law, Jennifer Wren. They served their clients well and made so many lasting memories with each other that will live on in the stories they often told. Wren served as the elected Wise County Attorney in the mid-1970s and practiced law in Wise County from 1975 until 2011, at which time the Wise County Commissioners Court appointed him as the first judge of the newly established County Court-at-Law No. 2. The citizens of Wise County elected him 3 more times in 2012, 2016, and 2020. He sat on the bench until he retired in 2022. And we can't leave his career without mentioning the support he received from long-time legal assistant Debbie Gardner who worked by his side from 1978 until his retirement in 2022. At the time of his retirement, Stephen said, "I chose the legal profession because I believed at the time that it was an honorable way to help people. I still believe that today." And help people he did.

In fact, finding ways to help people and serve others was a driving force in Stephen's life well beyond his actual career. Wren loved to serve his community, as reflected by a long list of accomplishments, activities, and achievements: 2011 Decatur Citizen of the Year, president of the Decatur Chamber of Commerce, 49-year member and past president of the Decatur Lions Club, longtime member and past president of the Decatur Athletic Booster Club, president of the Decatur ISD Board of Trustees, founding member of the Decatur ISD Education Foundation, member of the Decatur Athletic Wall of Fame based on his outstanding support of Decatur athletics, volunteer member of the Decatur Fire Department, member of the Decatur Jaycees, chairman of the Wise Regional Health System board of directors, Coaches Outreach teacher and mentor, and deacon and 40-year Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Church of Decatur. Stephen had a passion for all sports. He led the local youth baseball program as county commissioner throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, creating a county-wide program to give youth as many opportunities as possible to play, and in the late 1980s, as a member of the Decatur school board, he helped reestablish the Decatur High School baseball program after an almost 25-year absence.

Although this list of professional and community accomplishments is long, those things were only a small part of Stephen's true legacy. Instead, his lasting and impactful legacy is most profoundly seen in the way he interacted with and loved the people around him. His legacy is found in his mischievous smile and in the pranks he and John Fostel played on each other and on other members of their office. It is unmistakable in the memories of long road trips, ski trips, and other vacations with his family. It's reflected in the most genuine kindness a person could display, as known by anybody who ever had a conversation with Stephen and knew they had his deepest and undivided attention and affection. It is evident in the true, deep, and meaningful lifelong relationships Stephen maintained with classmates, family members, co-workers, and almost everyone he encountered. It is seen in the countless times he gave his money or his time to a charity or a friend, family member, or random person who needed it, without ever asking for anything in return. It lives on in his relationship with his granddaughters, which included funny faces such as the "nosy pose," dances, and all things only a loving grandfather would do when asked by the granddaughters he adored. It is undeniable in the interactions with his grandsons who hung on his every word about faith, sports, history, jokes, careers, and all that life has to offer. It is apparent in the way he welcomed and treated two daughters-in-law and one son-in-law like they were his very own, because in his eyes they were. It lives on in the lives of his three children who adored him and learned from him how to love life, love each other, and leave a positive impact. It is certain in the strong faith and love of God and others he demonstrated every day and in every interaction. And perhaps most importantly, it is found in the 52-year marriage to the woman who was his best friend and life partner, who had his full and complete love, attention,



loyalty, and devotion until the day he died. He was truly one of a kind, and while he will be dearly missed, his lasting legacy of faith, love, kindness, and generosity will carry on. Stephen's parents Ralph and Penney Wren, parents-in-law Joe and LaVerne Forman,

brother John Shannon Wren, grandson Carrington Cash Wren, brother-in-law Michael Schutze, and niece Jessica Gage Bonesio preceded him in death. Survivors include wife LaDonna Forman Wren; children Jason and Jennifer Wren, Landon and Cat Wren, and Courtney and Phillip Daugherty; grandchildren Samuel, Isaac, Anna, Farrah, and Riggs Wren and Wrenly, Brock and Stevi Daugherty; sisters Sidney Schutze and Stephanie Gage and husband Ronnie; brother-in-law Jody Forman and wife Rhonda, and more cousins, nieces, nephews, classmates, and friends than one can count.

Honorary pallbearers are Kelly Tibbels, Bobby Wilson, Tom Long, Mike Scott, Pat Brown, Gary Cocanougher, Mason Woodruff, Mike Simpson, Myles, Mitchell, Ron Silvers, Chris Forbis, Clifford Mercer, Brock Smith, Mark Howell, Dana Manoushagian, Debbie Gardner, Jason Ingram, Lori Lowe, Dwight Reeves, Josh Fostel, Jerry Robinson, Phil Campbell, Bill Kaltenbach, Mike Conrad, Decatur High School Class of 1967, Wise County Bar Association, and First Baptist Church Adult 7 Men's Sunday School Class.

In lieu of flowers, do as Stephen would do and go help someone. Go serve someone. Make a donation to a charity of your choice. Volunteer for one of those charities. And leave a lasting and meaningful impact.

