



Stephen John Hudak

June 20, 1924 - January 6, 2014

Stephen John Hudak, 89, formerly of Rocky Hill, East Hampton and Stamford CT passed away after a brief but courageous battle with bladder cancer. Steve was born in Stamford to the late Stephen Hudak and Anna Lipko Hudak.

As a child, Steve was initially encouraged to become a dancer of tap, toe and ballet by his parents. He became quite accomplished at it but after a severe foot swelling related to a bout with rheumatic fever which caused permanent damage to his foot, dance was no longer an option.

He found his calling in music. A friend offered him a saxophone which he could play easily by ear. After seeing a natural talent, he began taking music lessons both in CT and NY and started playing in non-union trios. He played Alto & Tenor Sax and Clarinet as well. Give him a piece of sheet music and he could read it like a book.

In 1943, he had an audition with The Frank Dailey Band and got the job! This was the catalyst that began his career of traveling with the Big Bands of Vinnie Wilson, Jack Adams, Kenny Sargeant, and finally Louie Prima. He played his alto sax to celebrities such as Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis and Margaret Hamilton. He even had the chance to meet Frank Sinatra.

Even though he had a passion for BeBop, Jazz and Swing, life on the road was not an easy one but, he had the chance to see many cities throughout the US. He actually turned down an offer from Tommy Dorsey to join his band for a tour in South America. He returned to playing in small group venues after being on the road for a number of years.

Steve also worked at Sorenson, a division of Raytheon of Norwalk and Data Products in Stamford as an electronics inspector, retiring in 1989. He was a Life member of the Knights of Columbus, a member of the First Catholic Slovak Union for 50 years and a member of the American Federation of Musicians, Norwalk local 52.

He was predeceased by his loving wife Anna Umile Hudak of 46 years in 2002 and by a niece, Laurie Sheaffer. He is survived by a daughter Cynthia Dravis and her husband Dan of East Hampton CT; a sister, Helen Sheaffer and her husband John of Shippensburg, PA; two nephews, Steven Sheaffer and his wife Celeste of FL and Johnny Sheaffer of Shippensburg PA; and by other close family members, Lawrence Nemchek of Stamford, Susan and Kevin O'Kane of Stamford, Theresa and Jess Szczesiul of Shelton and Tommy Nemchek, his wife Cathy and daughter Rachel of VT.

His family would like to express their deepest appreciation to his special friend Joan, her supporting family and his extended family at THE LODGE AT COLDSRING in Rocky Hill, CT. Where even there, he was in their choir....music was just a part of him. "Smile what's the use of crying, you'll find that life is still worthwhile if you just smile" - Charlie Chaplin. The family also wishes to extend a special thanks to Kathy Lundell of Caregiving by Kathy and to the nursing staff at the Chestelm Health and Rehab Center in Moodus CT as well as the nurses of the Middlesex Hospice program.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to: Hungry for Music at : www.hungr

yformusic.org

At the request of the family, all services will be held private.

Tribute Wall

MA

“ I had the privilege of interviewing Stephen as a spotlighted resident of the month while I was the Enrichment Coordinator at The Lodge. What fun filling the curio cabinet with his momentos! His musical journey absolutely amazed me. Mardi Gras celebrations were a special treat for Stephen, not only for the jazz music, but also for the camaraderie afterwards with the performers. When Stephen finally joined the Singing Buddies, his solo rendition of "Smile" was simply beautiful. A kind man, a gentle soul, and always ready to share a smile.

MargieGirardi-Telech - January 15, 2014 at 12:00 AM

SC

“ Many years ago, I wanted to be a guitar player. I knew the fellow I was named after my Uncle Steve, was already an accomplished musician. At nine years old, he took me very seriously consulting me with respect that was undeserving of a nine year old. To further inspire me, he opened an old black case and extracted from it - a glittering-gold, J-shaped object. The masterly crafted vibrations that emanated from that sax were heavenly. They inspired me to a lifetime of musical appreciation and creation. I know Uncle Steve inspired many others to experience their lives as he did with humor, love and gratitude. He truly was a gem! It is a blessing to have shared his life with all of us. Heaven's music has certainly become brighter! Steve & Celeste Sheaffer

Steve & CelesteSheaffer - January 12, 2014 at 12:00 AM

HJ

“ Dearest Cyndi, My heart is aching for you, because my heart is also aching for my precious brother. I have so many wonderful memories of him. His musical talents were unbelievable. Thank you for being a wonderful daughter to my brother, and thank you Dan, for being a wonderful brother-in-law! Uncle John and I pray that time will heal the pain in your heart. God bless you both! Love, Aunt Helen & Uncle John

Helen and JohnSheaffer - January 12, 2014 at 12:00 AM

DA

“ Dear Cyndi, Dan and family..Sorry to hear of Uncle Steve's passing. He was a great guy as well as a great musician. Sincerely Dan Ferrero of Lithia, FL and Marion Ferrero of Stamford, CT.

DanielFerrero - January 12, 2014 at 12:00 AM

TC

“ Please accept our sincere condolences.

Tom & CatherineNemchek - January 10, 2014 at 12:00 AM

MA

“ My husband and I met Steve at our communion/rosary services. One day Steve told me all about his amazing life. I will remember him for his sweetness and smile. May he rest in peace.

MariaBerman - January 10, 2014 at 12:00 AM

LA

“ My sincere sympathy and prayers to Cyndi, Dan, and all of Steve's family and friends. He was a great man and a great "brother" to my Mary.

LawrenceNemchek - January 09, 2014 at 12:00 AM

TJ

“ Dear Cyndi, Dan and Family: Please accept our condolences in the loss of your wonderful father. He will surely be missed by all that loved him. May God bless you all.

Theresa and JessicaSzczesiuł - January 09, 2014 at 12:00 AM

SK

“ We will never forget Uncle Steve, who we looked to when growing up as the kindest, most patient and compassionate role model anyone could have. His musical talent, good-natured sense of humor, (as well as being the best story-teller!) will remain always in our memories. With our love and sincere condolences to Cyndi, Dan and loved ones. 'A great soul serves everyone all the time. A great soul never dies. It brings us together again and again.' ' Maya Angelou

Susan & KevinO'Kane - January 09, 2014 at 12:00 AM