

Funeral Service for Steven Silidker

Steven Silidker
1944 - 2017

Funeral Service

Saturday, March 25th, 2017

Minister Graylin Ross's Introduction

Dear friends, on this full day of Spring, we gather to honor and celebrate the life of our beloved friend, Steven Silidker.

Let us stand and remember our friend Steven in silent presence.

Silence

Thank you, please be seated.

Through their being and their efforts, each student forms a stem in the living tree of our school. The lifetime of each student, as they create their true Self, raises our School and enriches our lives.

Our Teacher says, 'Ascending souls finish their roles very well prepared, having received the presence allotted to them in this lifetime.'

Steven is an example for all of us. His return to the divine source reminds us of our own journey. His valuation reminds us to treasure this great mystery of life.

Reading: Shakespeare, Sonnet 116, read by Geoffrey Rowland

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Music: *Impossible Dream* - sung by Paul De Silva

Eulogy for Steven, Victoria Craig

I met Steven on a blind date on Valentine's Day 1969 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I was 19, a college junior, and Steven was 24 and completing his last year of graduate studies at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry.

Our first date was to a planetarium where we spent the evening gazing at the planets and constellations projected on the ceiling. When we married in June 1970, the rabbi said our union was "written in the stars".

Right from the start, Steven was an engaging, unconventional and spontaneous companion. He could see beyond the ordinary and imagine infinite possibilities in every moment.

He was outgoing and entertaining, and although you wouldn't know it by looking at him, he excelled in sports such as tennis, bowling, baseball and softball.

We lived in Miami, Florida where Steven was raised and where he began his optometry practice after graduation.

Steven loved travelling and never missed a chance to visit different places. When a childhood friend invited us to come to Los Angeles in the summer of 1974, Steven immediately made plans to do that.

His friend had recently joined the Fellowship and we spent most of our time together discussing work ideas and the Teacher. Steven completely embraced the Fourth Way as presented, and from then on was intent on being in the School.

[Steven wanted to attend prospective student meetings in Berkley on our way to San Francisco, but was told he couldn't do that until he relocated.]

Without telling anyone, including me, in late August 1974, Steven flew to Los Angeles, attended all three prospective student meetings and officially joined the Fellowship on September 1. He called me from the airport as he was about to

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fly back to Florida and announced we were moving to California.

Our recently purchased home and successful optometry practice were quickly dispensed with. In November we hitched two cars and a U-Haul together and drove to Carmel, CA where Robert suggested we move and where I joined the School.

Two years later, after time in the Los Angeles and Sacramento Centers, at Robert's request, and with our 7-month old son Shea, we opened the St. Petersburg Center.

Our time in the St. Petersburg Center was memorable, not only because of the students who came through, some that are still with us, or that it snowed there for the first time in 40 years but also because as Center Director, Steven had a wonderful ability to convey work angles that were emotional, understandable and often amusing.

He wasn't shy about sharing his knowledge and being with anybody who would listen. He made several attempts to speak about the Work and our School with our Teaching House neighbors.

We later discovered they were members of the Ku Klux Klan, who held loud meetings in their backyard with burning crosses and men dressed all in white, like ghosts.

But that was Steven. What others might consider an obstacle, he saw as opportunity.

Though Steven and I parted in 1980 we remained good friends and in close touch. He was always a caring, nurturing influence for our son.

In the early 1980s, Steven entered a contest and won first prize – a trip to India to Meher Baba's ashram. The trip was a tremendous shock for Steven's work. He could more clearly appreciate consciousness and the efforts necessary to become a conscious being.

He returned inspired, with renewed energy and commitment to being the words. He had become transfused with the explicit direction to value presence above all else and follow his Teacher's instructions.

In the 1990s Steven moved to Apollo and built a home.

Due to symptoms of a recurring bipolar disorder and heart problems requiring surgery, Steven experienced an interval in the early 2000s. But he persevered. With determination and unwavering faith in his Teacher, fortified by his own verifications, he emerged from these difficulties, working on himself with renewed urgency and purpose.

He was employed for two years as an optometrist in Singapore, where he lived with our son, before coming back to Apollo. Here he met Lucia, the love of his life, and initiated an active, focused and successful courtship over two continents.

Lucia and Steven married on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2016. Lucia is the light, the gentle, refined, supportive soul that Steven so hoped to find in his remaining years.

Lucia said this about their relationship:

“Everything happened so fast that I believe we were not together by chance, that something higher had joined us. I had asked God for the opportunity to live at Apollo after my retirement and he gave me more than I asked for – he gave me Steven. The time we had together was wonderful. There was still friction but we came to understand where that came from and each time we transformed the difficulties our bond grew stronger. We found that by doing the work together, we were better. Our time together was so short, but for us it was a whole life, it was so intense and so loving. I feel him in my heart now and that we are together eternally.”

When Steven learned that his heart condition had worsened and there were other major complications, he accepted the situation with grace and courage, without complaint, with no self-pity.

Although very weak, he regaled visitors with stories and quotes. He had an overwhelmingly positive attitude. At one point Lucia insisted on a no-talking exercise, so friends could share their energy in silence with Steven, and he could preserve his own.

On his final day, Steven was extremely frail but continued to share his essence and being with everyone. At home with Lucia he spoke with his son for the last time and received a precious visit from our Teacher. Steven was ready and prepared for the next chapter of his play.

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As we remember Steven and reflect on his new journey, let us recall Robert's beautiful words, "We are all destined to become the eternal now."

Music: *Begin the Beguine* sung by Paul De Silva

Reading: *Meher Baba*, read by Suzanne Patterson

With Robert, Meher Baba was the guiding angel who guided Steven's evolution. Steven's favorite song was 'Don't worry, be happy!' And he listened to it continually during his final days.

Do your best. Then Don't worry.

Be happy! Leave the rest to me. ~~

Don't worry. Be happy! Remember me; I will help you.

Merely to say, I want to see God, or I want to realize God is similar to an ant saying, 'I want to become an elephant!' Mere words have nothing in them. The heart must thirst to seek God.

Minister Ross's Conclusion:

An ancient king said, 'Although I am a child in the eyes of the Gods, without ceasing, day and night, I act in harmony with heaven.' Steven is now part of that light that beckons from above. He forms part of a new succession in the celestial world, made lovelier still because he bore her part.

May Steven's loving dedication to the Teacher, the school and his beloved friends serve to strengthen the same in each of us.

May his gentle ways and simple measure of life's difficulties inspire us in transforming the burden of life.

And may we be filled with the same unfaltering love of the gods and of his Teacher, to form a gracious fellowship of loving friends.

Dearest Steven, we thank thee!

Candle ceremony

'Our body is just a shell, our soul will continue.'

Extinguish and light the candles.

Urn-bearer comes forward, lifts the urn and leads the procession from the hall.

Funeral procession.

At the Cemetery:

Music as funeral party arrives: Chris Bautista on guitar

Minister Ross's Introduction

Here in this sacred place, consecrated by those here present and by those whose bodies lie here, we release Steven to his and our true home, even as we return his remains to the earth from where it sprung.

Reading: Rumi, read by Blair Wilson

When I die
When my coffin
is being taken out,
You must never think
I am missing this world.

Don't shed any tears,
Don't grieve or feel remorse.

When you see my body being carried
Don't cry for my leaving.
I'm not leaving,
I'm arriving at eternal Love.

When you leave me in the grave
Don't say goodbye,
It looks like the end.
It seems like a sunset
But in reality it is a dawn.
When the grave takes us,
That is when our soul is freed.
When for the last time we close our mouth
Our words and soul will belong to
The world of no place and no time.

Minister

The earth returns to the earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, as we look toward eternal life.

Urn bearer puts urn in the grave.

Minister Ross's Conclusion

Rabia said, 'Love comes from eternity, and returns into eternity'. A divine flame returns to its divine source. The circle of life is complete. We part so that we meet again.

Minister and family take rose petals and put them into the grave.

Let us bid farewell and then withdraw for a toast at Apollo d'Oro, and celebrate the gift of life yet allotted to each of us.

Rose-petals offered to the assembly.