



Barry John Hilchey

May 8, 1950 - November 18, 2019

We're saddened to share the news of the passing of Barry John Hilchey on Monday, November 18th.

Barry John Hilchey, born to Gerry and Jean Hilchey in Owen Sound, will be missed by many, including loving wife of nearly 38 years, Donna, sons Colin and Joel, daughter-in-law Kathleen (Wright), grandkids Malcolm, Margot, and Sage, and sisters Valda (Ford) and Sue (Snowdon).

Barry always had a mix of technological and artistic interests. Growing up in Owen Sound, Barry was as comfortable puttering with technology in his father's electric repair shop as he was playing guitar and banjo in his high school folk band.

He studied Engineering at University of Waterloo, but traded in his rolling ruler for a respirator at a mining job in Thompson, Manitoba. In fact, he once claimed the motivation for growing a beard (which he would wear for nearly 50 years thereafter) came from the backlash to being forbidden from growing a beard that would interfere with the respirator's face seal.

Thompson turned out to be the beginning of many loves. The beard, of course. But also nectarines; he recalls eating his first ever Nectarine on the train en route to Thompson and being utterly amazed that such a delicious fruit existed. Most significantly, he met Donna, whom he would marry in 1981.

He and Donna left Thompson for work at St. Marys Cement in the late 1970's. In fact, they lived together for a time in the house that is now the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. Unaware of the future significance of the company-owned house (or perhaps just unsatisfied with the lodging), he was proud to build a family home completed in 1987. (Well, technically the house would only be finished in 1998, when they needed to add baseboards and window-sills before putting the house on the market. But it was finished enough for the Hilchey family. Barry: "Why hire someone when I can do it myself?" Donna:

“But do you think you’ll actually do it?” Barry: “You think I won’t?!”)

During many wonderful years in St. Marys, they welcomed Joel in 1982, Colin in 1987, and Barry once said that were he able to live life again, the only thing he definitely would NOT want to give up was raising his two sons. He was a proud, kind, and loving father. He taught the boys math, coached little league, directed school theatre, went canoe-camping, and was always encouraging of a balance between athletic, academic, and musical interests.

He was involved with the St. Marys Community Players, typically on the lighting team, but once appearing as a lute-playing minstrel on stage as one of Robin Hood’s merry men. In Barry’s words: “I didn’t really learn to play the lute. I just got a lute and tuned the 6 strings like a guitar.” A woodworking enthusiast, he attempted to craft his own lute, which never got completed, but is still in the basement more than 20 years later.

One of his most meaningful times in life, he said, was serving on the founding team of St. Marys for Children of Chernobyl – a group that brought kids from Belarus to homestay in Canada for the summer.

In 1998, after nearly 20 years with St. Marys Cement, he accepted a job in Redding, California, where he developed a love of mountaineering. He summited Mt. Shasta with each of his sons, Mt. Whitney with friends, and hiked the Grand Canyon more than once. His love of mountains sparked another artistic interest in stained glass, and he designed and completed a stained glass for both Mt Shasta and Mt. Whitney, and he had plans to create a third piece - The Grand Canyon. The materials are still in the basement.

In California especially, in the tradition of his parents, the house was often lively with friends and family – all were welcome in the Hilchey home. He also coached an Odyssey of the Mind team – a program that promotes creative problem solving amongst kids. He continued acquiring musical instruments – a trumpet, sax, bass, and several more, just in case someone wanted to learn to play them, though he never felt he himself was much good at any of them. Although Barry’s life is a legacy of half-finished projects, one notable thing he DID finish was his degree. Just before I (Joel) graduated high school in California, Dad completed his degree from University of Waterloo by correspondence – possibly still listening to cassette tapes...

With both kids moved out, Barry accepted a job near St.Louis Missouri in 2006 and spent the next 10 years travelling the globe as a sought-after expert in the cement industry for new plant start-ups and installations. He tried to keep himself healthy at the gym. He

enjoyed biking on trails with Donna – especially if they ended at a brewery. He turned his musical focus to the hammered dulcimer, which he learned to play well enough to play along with a recording and impress any listeners. Meanwhile, he turned his technical prowess toward turning wood, buying a fancy-pants lathe (“It was a really good deal!”), and making bowls, pens, an ice cream scoop, and numerous “ornaments”. He always joked that with the cost of materials and accounting for minimal labour cost, he figured he could break even at a cost of \$272/pen. The business never took off.

Barry was diagnosed in 2015 with Neuro-Endocrine Tumor, a rare cancer that had originated in the pancreas. While the cancer grows slowly and shows few symptoms, it’s rarely detected until after it has become serious; from the day of diagnosis, the goal was not to cure, but to extend the quality of life. True to Barry’s highly inquisitive and analytical approach to life, he learned as much information as he could, and often seemed to know as much about the disease as the doctors themselves.

In addition to getting a few non-essential organs removed, Barry spent a few weeks literally being radioactive. While he could only joke that he glowed in the dark, US border security did once stop him for extended questioning because they detected radiation from his abdomen: “Yes sir, it’s Lutetium 177... A clinical trial of Peptide Receptor Radionuclide Therapy in my liver sir... Yes sir.. No sir, I’m afraid I can’t remove it and show you.” But fortunately, aside from a few weeks here and there, treatment was minimally intrusive and Barry maintained a generally excellent quality of life for more than four years.

During this time, Barry became a Grampa, first to Malcolm, and then to twins Margot and Sage, and he blossomed in the role exceptionally well. After moving back to Canada, he frequently made the 6:30 am trek across town in the snow to help change twin diapers, read books, and help get Malcolm off to school. The grandkids adored his warm and loving character, which isn’t surprising given that he has always been a warm and welcome adult in the presence of kids.

He visited Colin in Japan, and managed 4 years of cottage trips to Quebec. He continued to enjoy morning coffee conversations with Donna in bed, and he especially enjoyed sitting on the deck watching the trees and birds. His final few projects included replacing electrical switches, rigging up an automatic irrigation system for the deck flowers, and even helping Joel rig up the drill press to make some customized rat-trap juggling wands.

In his final 10 days, Barry started experiencing more pain, was more confused, and was moving more slowly. He wasn’t scared of dying – he was just so disappointed that he wouldn’t get to experience the next 30 years. Monday morning, feeling clammy and short

of breath, they called for an ambulance. Not wanting to trouble the paramedics, he walked downstairs to meet them. On the way out of the house, he reminded the paramedics that he had a DNR – but effective only after 8 pm, once his son Colin had arrived from Japan (a trip that had been planned a month earlier).

Monday was spent in the hospital with family, reminiscing with a “Retroactive Bucket List” – all the things we were so happy to have done. Barry continued to make jokes, and aside from learning more bad news about what was happening to his body, it was a lovely day together. Barry was able to tell the doctors that he didn’t want to be escalated to the ICU. Colin, thankfully, arrived right on cue – walking through the door at 8:01 pm. Barry was happy to see him – responsive enough to say his name and smile at some of Colin’s memories too. Shortly after, Barry’s body started shutting down, and he slipped away peacefully just after 11pm, surrounded by his family.

At another funeral, I heard Dad say that the faint silver lining of a death was that it brought people together. It’s in that spirit that a small gathering for friends and family was held at Donna & Barry’s home – and I know Dad would be thrilled to know that his home is still a welcome gathering place where all are welcome.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Carcinoid-Neuro-Endocrine Tumour Society of Canada at cnetscanada.org

Comments



“ Barry was a dear friend and we are so very sad that he he is no longer with us. He was taken way too soon. He was a smart, kind, funny man who could make us laugh with his quirky, dry sense of humor. His funniest quips were often said with a perfectly straight face!! We look back with such good memories of the fun times we spent with him and Donna while they lived in Missouri. We will miss him and his engaging presence in our lives.

We send our sincere condolences to Donna and family
Carol and John Macfadyen

Carol Hudgens - December 06, 2019 at 01:45 PM



“ So many wonderful memories. Canoeing, tasting Barry's homemade bread, travels to cement conferences, little theatre and much much more. Barry led a very full life and we were honoured to be part of it. Condolences to Donna, Joel and family and Colin. Don and Eva Anderson.

Eva - November 30, 2019 at 12:46 PM



“ I was sorry to read of Barry's passing. When Natalie and then Allison joined the St Mary's children's choir, Barry welcomed our family with open arms. He was such a warm loving person. Thank you for sharing his life story. We lost contact after your family moved to Redding so it was nice to read about his life. The world has lost a great man. My condolences to all of you. I know you will cherish the memories Nancy (Hazeleger) Creeden.

nancy creeden - November 30, 2019 at 07:17 AM



“ Wow, Rhonda and I are so sorry for your loss of a wonderful, kind and very helpful man. We were fortunate to have known Barry when he was very active in the music department at Shasta High here in Redding, CA. Barry would open his home to other fathers for a late night beer after all of us would spend the early evening building sets for the musicals our children performed in. I really enjoyed Barry and consider him a good friend from another chapter in our lives we shared together.

George & Rhonda Shelburne

George Shelburne - November 29, 2019 at 02:33 PM



“ Sue, Vaida and your families sorry to hear about the loss of your brother/uncle. He has left your family circle too early. You are all in my thoughts during this time of grief. Sincerely,
Heather Drummond

Heather Drummond - November 28, 2019 at 10:47 PM



“ An old and dear friend. A member of our wedding party in Thompson, Manitoba 49 years ago today. Barry wore heavy socks and sandals. The mother of the bride was horrified.
Bill and Debbie Dingman

Bill Dingman - November 28, 2019 at 04:21 PM



“ lit a candle in memory of Barry John Hilchey



November 28, 2019 at 10:14 AM



“ We will miss Barry dearly at our CNETS cancer support group. He was a huge inspiration to all of us. My deepest condolences.

Vanessa Mann - November 27, 2019 at 10:02 PM