



Craig Dennis Pedersen

December 24, 1952 - December 23, 2024

Craig Dennis Pedersen passed away unexpectedly on December 23, 2024 in Austin, Texas.

Craig was born in 1952 to Irene and Arthur Pedersen. He was raised in Hackensack, New Jersey and graduated from Rutgers University in 1974.

His early interests in political life and politics led him to a Masters in Public Affairs from the LBJ School of Public Affairs in Austin where he was later recognized as a distinguished alumnus. He served state government in various positions including as an aide to James Nugent at the Texas Railroad Commission, Bob Bullock at the Texas Comptroller's Office and William P. Hobby in the Lieutenant Governor's Office. He then proudly served for many years as the Executive Director of the Texas Water Development Board before moving to the private sector to work for URS and then Enviro Water Minerals.

Late in his career Craig taught classes and led programs at the LBJ School of Public Affairs and wrote and taught especially on the importance of character in public and nonprofit leadership.

Craig loved the mountains and deserts of the West, especially Big Bend National Park which he once hiked across the entirety of alone. He also loved family, history, travel, and meeting new people.

Craig was committed to public service for the sake of the common good. He loved justice, hated injustice, and valued good character above all else.

Craig is survived by his children, Daniel and Avery, his brother Arthur Pedersen Jr., and his grandson, Marion.

Services will be held at Hyde Park Presbyterian Church on Friday, January 10th, at 1:00pm, with a reception to follow.

The family is grateful to Mary Thompson and Paul Keeper, to Shelly and Tom and Cindy from Overture Mueller, and to all his friends and colleagues who have been so generous in their support.

In lieu of flowers, please offer a donation to Austin Sunshine Camps.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JAN 10. 1:00 PM (CT)

Hyde Park Presbyterian Church
3913 Avenue B
Austin, TX 78751
<https://www.hydeparkaustin.org/>

Reception to follow

Tribute Wall

JR

“ Craig and I were classmates in high school. He was thoughtful, intelligent, and kind. We both played in the school band, he the French Horn pitch perfect.
I was saddened when Craig disclosed on FaceBook about his health; marveled how he bicycled through Europe; and cheered when I read his eloquent political posts about our country’s politics. His voice had been silenced. Craig’s legacy carries on with his family, friends, students, and anyone who had the privilege to meet him.

Joan B. Reid

Joan Bellofatto Reid

Joan B. Reid - July 22, 2025 at 01:31 PM

FM

I too was a classmate of Craig’s in high school. I remember his ready, smile, intelligence, and friendliness.
He was one of the good ones 🙏

Florence DeGeorgia MCGovern - July 22, 2025 at 03:23 PM

SK

“ My deepest condolences to Craig’s family and those closest to him. I count myself lucky to have been his student at the LBJ School, where his quick wit and approachability helped make graduate school less intimidating. His emphasis on integrity and judgment comes to mind often when I’m facing various situations at work. Aside from what I learned from him in the classroom, I was quite touched by the tenderness and affection he had for his cats. After I graduated, I was glad to see him living his best life - hiking and biking in Scotland (amongst his other travels) - via his social media posts. Thank you, Craig, for all that you gave to your students, family, friends, the State of Texas, the LBJ School and our community. You shall be deeply missed.

Stacy Sutton Kerby - January 12, 2025 at 03:27 PM

EB

“ My sincerest condolences to Craig’s family. When I met him, Craig was an admired and respected professor and leader of the LBJ School’s EMPL program. He was a thoughtful advisor during my time as an EMPL student, and I’m very sorry for his loss. May his memory be for a blessing always.

Esther Burnham - January 10, 2025 at 03:11 PM

BS

“ Craig was a tremendous, practical, and highly effective mentor. As a student in the inaugural EMPL cohort at the LBJ School, Craig quickly established his expectations for all of us and adhered to that standard throughout the program. His commitment to all of us made us better, smarter. I will forever be grateful for his leadership and his quick wit! God bless you, Craig!

Blake M Sawyer - January 10, 2025 at 12:08 PM

ND

“ Prof. Craig was a wonderful human being beside his professional career. he was very kind and friendly personality. He was regularly in touch with me after my EMPL. He was life-loving man. He will be missed forever.

Nasimullah Danish - January 09, 2025 at 11:47 AM

KZ

“ I've known Craig since our graduate school days. I don't recall exactly how we met, but I remember we would occasionally jog together around Lady Bird Lake back then. Mostly, when I contemplate our 44+ year friendship, I am reminded of a friend, who even in our younger years while jogging, was not afraid to engage in personally revealing conversations about important aspects of our lives, whether they be challenges or joys. These serious and honest conversations over the years created in me a sense of our friendship as a reliable and steady rock, even though we didn't see each other very often. Also, perhaps because of these conversations, it gave me great joy to hear him laugh and to make him laugh. We shared a similar sense of humor, and could find a way to joke about something even in darker times. He seemed to be really happy in his retirement when he died; it makes me sad that he didn't have more time to enjoy it.

Daniel and Avery, he loved you so much and would update me on your lives each time we met. My heart is with you and the rest of your family.

Kristie Zamrazil

Kristie Zamrazil - January 09, 2025 at 10:37 AM

BB

“ I first met Craig in the Governor’s Executive Development Program over two decades ago. Since then, I’ve been a witness to at least some of the amazing career achievements you will have seen in his obituary and other posts to this site. I got to know him best, though, through our work together in the LBJ School’s Executive Master in Public Leadership program.

As a program aspiring to develop executive-level leaders, it was imperative, I thought, to have those who have successfully led a public-sector agency involved in teaching in the EMPL. We were thrilled when Craig Pedersen agreed to both teach in and be the initial director of the EMPL.

Over the next 8 years I was privileged to work closely with Craig and to see both the leadership wisdom he brought to our program as well as the character traits that made him a wonderful human being. Craig was consistently cheerful, always optimistic, caring, a colleague that could both challenge you respectfully and support you fully at the same time, and committed to making the students’ experience in the EMPL program the best it could be. Craig’s impact on our EMPL alumni – and on me – will be felt for years to come.

Some of the longitudinal studies I most appreciate in the field of leadership development asks people what they most look for in leaders they will willingly follow. The answers that tend to top the list year after year are honesty, competence, forward-looking, and inspiring. Craig Pedersen embodied those characteristics. Craig Pedersen was a leader I would willingly follow.

I can’t attend in person the ceremony on the 10th to honor the memory of my friend and colleague Craig Pedersen, but I’m thankful to get to the chance to honor him with this post. I will miss the footballs games we attended together, I will miss the adult beverages we shared at his favorite places in East Austin, and I will miss having him only a phone call away.

Barry Bales - January 07, 2025 at 04:30 PM

VM

“ *Having Craig Pedersen as my professor during my graduate program at the LBJ School of Public Affairs was such an honor. He was kind, funny, inspirational and such a light to all his students. After the pandemic, many of our courses took place online. I learned so much about what a true servant hearted leader is from Professor Pedersen and am grateful for everything he taught me. As a fellow cat owner, my favorite was seeing his fur babies on the screen with him! He will be missed!*

Victoria Moe - January 07, 2025 at 02:14 PM

IN

“ *Kind, generous, intelligent. Those are the words that most remind me of Craig. He is one of the people that took a chance on me and helped me pursue my dream of attending the LBJ School, and for that I will be forever grateful. I learned so much from him about the importance of character in leadership, and how you can use kindness to make the world a better place. The world is a little dimmer without Craig, but I'm so grateful that I have the opportunity to carry some of his light in my work and the people and communities I help with the teachings he gave me.*



Iván Nieves - January 07, 2025 at 12:17 PM

CB

“ I knew Craig as a professor at LBJ School, and he became a friend. He had such an impressive career in state government. He was so encouraging and supportive, with an admirable passion to pass on what he had learned in his distinguished career. Craig was always learning, and sharing his insights. More than anything, I appreciate how supportive and approachable he was. He gave me confidence in myself and in my abilities. He lit up when talking about his family. I know he loved them most dearly. His memory will live on.

Carolyn Barrett - January 07, 2025 at 10:50 AM

“ *Death of Craig Pedersen*

The LBJ School of Public Affairs (LBJ School) has lost a loyal and distinguished alumnus and professor with the death of Craig Pedersen on December 23, 2024.

He was a caring, involved, and supportive member of his immediate families, including his two children (Daniel and Avery), his grandson (Marion), and his brother, Arthur Pedersen, Jr., also a LBJ School alum.

As a professional, Craig was diligent, creative, and effective. He was never satisfied with exemplary performance, but sought to take on and succeed in ‘impossible’ challenges that could make a difference in the lives of people. His secret skill was that he communicated and lived respect: with those for whom he worked; those he supervised; his peers; stakeholders in the topics of concern; citizens of who would be affected by decisions; and even implications for people who have no direct interests.

As a staff member early in his career, he worked for some of the most demanding senior Texas leaders: James Nugent, Bob Bullock, and William Hobby. His success led to his appointment to be Executive Director of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). Craig changed the TWDB in many ways. For example, he created and implemented Texas state regional water planning procedures which have continued to the present. His regional planning is cited as an example by other states for the inclusion of local, regional and state-wide concerns. The proof of their value is that over 30 years they have led to consensus priorities through their design and implementation.

As a senior private sector executive of URS and Enviro Water Minerals, Craig’s leadership made a difference both with innovative environmental design and business success. Craig was a realist and optimist who focused on outcomes and had patience with

administrative processes that could be tamed.

As a faculty member and the first Director of the Executive Master's degree in Public Leadership program within the LBJ School, Craig was a creative academic program designer and valued colleague and teacher. Those who had a chance to have him as an instructor appreciated the content, quality, and challenges of his classroom, his sage and supportive career advice, and his encouragement talking about difficult topics and how to overcome administrative challenges. Students and colleagues wanted to be around him because of his relaxed, creative, and cooperative style.

As a person, Craig had courage and constantly demanded more of himself than others might find reasonable. For example, he hiked across Big Bend National Park and later across Spain's most famous pilgrimage trail, the Camino de Santiago.

As a loyal LBJ School graduate, Craig's life exemplified LBJ's vision and mission for the School: "...to produce thinkers and doers: people who dream of progress and will try to turn those dreams into achievements."

From David Eaton, who both enjoyed Craig when Craig was a LBJ School student in his class, and over many years as a water resource colleague. Will not be able to be in Austin January 10, so I will be there in spirit.

David Eaton - January 06, 2025 at 11:38 PM



“ *A Stickelbault lit a candle in memory of Craig Dennis Pedersen*



A Stickelbault - January 06, 2025 at 08:35 PM

JL

“ Amiable, smart, encouraging, and kind. My memories of Craig Pedersen are wrapped up in these character traits that he so exemplified. Craig was my professor at the LBJ School in the EMPL program that he helped create, and for that I am forever grateful. We first bonded over walking the Camino de Santiago, he taught me about leadership, and we remained in touch after I graduated, meeting up for lively coffee conversations that lifted me up. Above all, Craig demonstrated a deep love for his family whom he referenced often with such affection and pride. Craig must have known how many lives he touched. I sure hope so. He will be missed.

Jennifer Long - January 05, 2025 at 11:49 AM

BB

“ For Craig's family, friends who cherished him, and those touched by his character, his love of family and life, his passion for strong leadership to serve our communities - - - and simply, Craig was a delightful person to be around we have lost an very bright light. I knew Craig when he worked for Gov. Hobby, when he was Exec Director of the TWDB, and we stayed in touch over the years during his time at the LBJ school, writing his book on leadership, and his move from the "cave" (I believe Craig said Daniel told him he needed to get out of his den - calling it a cave?) to a downtown condo. He so loved his family, always talking about them. And he was delighted with his adventure on the Camino de Santiago. Craig was an intellectual, and he was an adventurer. He lived his life with happiness. My heart breaks that he left us so unexpectedly. But as Stacey Abel said in an earlier post....What a life.
With a full heart,
Bobbie J Barker



Bobbie J Barker - January 03, 2025 at 09:02 PM

CM

“ *When I was working for the TWDB (TNRIS) in 1997 I got very ill. Craig, called me and asked me what he could do to help me. I said, have everyone who could, please donate a pint of blood.*

Then when I got well, Craig helped me put on blood drives at the TWDB. Craig was always the first in line to give blood.

Will miss you my Friend,

Carol Silberman McElroy

Carol Frances McElroy - January 03, 2025 at 06:35 PM

LY

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Lynn - January 03, 2025 at 12:27 PM

EB

“ It breaks my heart that he’s gone. We were lucky enough to see him in October when he came to our annual Stakeholder Breakfast at Austin Sunshine Camps (ASC). He always showed up with a huge smile and hugs for our entire team.

We were introduced to Craig a couple of years ago through our board president, who was one of his students at UT. In the beginning, he’d come to our public events, come find me afterwards, and say something like, “I love this place! I want to do more! How can I help?”

Eventually, I asked him if he’d be interested in chairing our Expansion Team, and helping our organization figure out how and when we could serve more kids. He accepted without hesitation. He led that team for a year through some awesome research and analysis. He was always leading by example, thoughtful about everything he did and said, and wanted to produce something that the organization would be able to use for years to come, which he did.

I began asking him for leadership advice, which he’d always give. Once his hip replacement surgery was behind him, we turned those leadership meetings into walks around Town Lake, where we’d talk about leadership, organizational development, and the complicated mess of being a human.

I feel so lucky to have gotten advice from him - I’ll carry it with me for a long time. He always put things in perspective for me, encouraged me, and listened. He was such a good listener.

During those walks, he never failed to mention his family and his upcoming travels, both of which he loved very much.

He left a big impact on Austin Sunshine Camps and me. I will miss him very much. Thank you to his family for mentioning ASC in his obituary. That means a whole lot to us.

Erica Blue, CEO of ASC

Erica Blue - January 02, 2025 at 03:07 PM

SA

“ Oh my God, I can't believe he's gone. He had a huge heart and brilliant mind and was a treasured friend.

I met Craig in the 1980s at the Capitol when my boss was chair of Senate Finance and he handled the state budget for the esteemed Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby. With his street-smart New Jersey accent and dark suits, Craig was a fierce fighter for funding to make lives better for all human beings in Texas. We called him the 'Bad Boy of Senate Finance.' In the mid 80s when state oil revenues begin to crash, requiring special session after session, we all worked around the clock until we could barely see straight - the halls filled with constituents from all over the state who'd come to plead not to cut their funding. Occasionally we would steal away to reboot: hightail it down to his big dark blue camping vehicle (was it a Suburban?) and head west on 15th to Redbud Trail. Once in the car, Craig cranked up the 60's & 70's music he loved so much. Not saying a word, we'd drive on windey roads to Bee Caves, music blasting and serving as what he called 'mental floss.' I remember when he and Sheila welcomed Daniel into the world and that became his primary focus. Before camera phones you'd carry photos around in your briefcase and that's just what he did, exchanging new ones out weekly. Daniel would eventually become one of my stepdaughter's best friends at LASA and we got to share that too. He adored his brother Art and was a wonderful son to his parents who surprisingly moved to Texas. I remember our families getting together when Avery was a little girl and he was trying to help her vanquish her nighttime fears by letting her sleep in a tent set up in the living room. I remember the joy he felt when Daniel married and later when Craig got to be a grandpa. No one was more proud.

And now I can't believe he's gone, but what he leaves in his wake is a life so well lived and loved. He made a real difference in the lives of all who knew him - and many more who didn't - but for whom he fought for on their behalf. What a life.

Stacey Abel - December 30, 2024 at 11:59 AM