



Steven Edward Kornguth

December 1, 1935 - September 21, 2020

Steve Edward Kornguth, also known by his Hebrew name Shimmon Zemel Elijahu, passed away on September 21, 2020 in the company of his family. He lived a dynamic and consequential life, full of love, learning and reflection through faith, art, science and music.

His professional accomplishments were many, but Steve cherished his family more than anything, especially his wife of 62 years, Peggy. The depth of their love was evident throughout their long marriage, and especially poignant through the many health challenges Peggy has endured and overcome. Throughout, Steve kept her top of mind and found ways to express it daily, from bringing her gifts to reading poetry to writing love notes for her and otherwise showing up in all the ways a genuinely loving husband can for his wife. Their love stands as a shining example of the best a couple can be to those of us lucky enough to have witnessed it.

Steve was a great pianist, an operaphile, and believer in the ability of arts and music to shape and reflect the best of humanity. He derived great pleasure from planning and taking trips with family, where he sought to explore and understand other cultures. He was an avid reader and an easy conversationalist. Steve was one of the smartest people most of us knew. He approached education - both teaching and learning - with sincerity, intentionality and enthusiasm.

The value of education was instilled in him by his immigrant family. Born in the Bronx, New York in 1935, he drew pride and identity from his Jewish faith and the influences of his hard-working parents Helen and Eugene, his brother Marty, and his many cousins, aunts and uncles. He relished memories about walks he and Marty took around the streets of New York, as well as their musical performances and laughing fits they would fall into, usually in the middle of earnest moments when their parents disciplined them. Steve also loved his encounters with his Uncle Moritz, who dressed in spats, suits and straw hats and modeled “correctness and gentlemanliness,” traits Steve valued.

He felt that the early education he received at Stuyvesant High School and then Columbia University, where he earned his B.A., provided the foundation for his lifelong pursuit of scientific knowledge and understanding. After earning a PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he returned to New York City for post-doctoral research. Shortly thereafter, he went back to Madison, where he was a professor of neurology and biomolecular chemistry at the University of Wisconsin from 1962 to 1998 and was awarded tenure. He had a robust research portfolio throughout his career, while he was also deeply engaged in teaching and mentoring students. He studied the biological basis of neurological disorders, auto-immune diseases and the development of binding agents and platforms for sensors and magnetic resonance image contrast materials. He served as Director of Neuroscience programs at the National Science Foundation for two years, and in 1998, saving the best for last, finished his career as a Texas Longhorn, where he directed the Biological and Chemical Countermeasures Program and studied how to sustain and enhance performance of soldiers. He served on the Army Science Board from 2004 to 2013, and in his final years, was proud to be part of the faculty at Dell Medical School at The University of Texas.

In recent years, Steve returned to his life-long passion of teaching undergraduate students while continuing his research projects. He wanted to find new ways of getting liberal arts students interested in scientific methods and inquiry. For his class's final exam, Steve asked his students to explain how themes found in literature can be viewed similarly to the concepts seen in auto-immune diseases. For those who knew Steve, this approach was radical enough to make perfect sense. His students and co-workers were inspired by Steve's energy and commitment to those around him, even as his health failed. Even within a month of his passing, Steve was busy working on a submission for publication.

It seems like the worst of times for someone with such wisdom, zest for life and good nature to leave us, but his spirit is carrying forth in those who knew and loved him, especially his beloved wife Peggy, brother Martin and Phyllis, son David, daughter Ingrid and James, and much-adored grandchildren, Benjamin, Gabriela (both in Austin), Lindsay (New York) and Greg (San Francisco).

Steve's family extends our heartfelt appreciation to his many friends and colleagues who meant so much to him. We also thank the caring and engaged staff of the Village at the Triangle, who went above and beyond in small and big ways to help him and us, and Halcyon Home, whose caregivers and Hospice team provided loving and attentive care throughout these last weeks.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Mulva Clinic for the Neurosciences at the Dell Medical School at The University of Texas to honor Steve's commitment to student learning and research.

Tribute Wall



“ Steven Edward Kornguth

October 14, 2022 at 12:02 PM



“ I am so saddened to hear about the passing of Steve. I met Steve, 4 years ago as a Ph.D. student in the neighboring lab to his office in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Education at UT Austin. I have so many good memories of our many conversations discussing my data and future plans and him telling me about his research and previous travels. He was always curious to learn about my research and provided me with much mentoring advice that I take with me. I always felt such support from Steve and I will always cherish our moments. He truly was a genuine, brilliant, and kind individual. I only hope he understood how great of an impact he had on many of us that interacted with him.

*Rest in peace, Steve.
My sincere condolences.*

Ann-Katrin "Anka" Grotle

Ann-Katrin Grotle - September 28, 2020 at 12:26 PM

WS

“ *What a beautiful Minyan service, where we learned what we already knew: Steve's insatiable curiosity, expansive intellect, constructive skepticism, and generosity of spirit. It's been a privilege and a delight to have been his colleague and friend. Even in his last phase, he was wishing us Good Thoughts! What a mensch.*

*With our sincere condolences,
Randi Eisner and Bill Schwartz*

William Schwartz - September 27, 2020 at 05:20 PM



“ *Oh how we miss Steve's brilliant and engaging presence. He was an extraordinary man who had a wonderful influence on so many, including all the Stewarts. We will remember him for his great energy, curiosity, generosity, and intelligence. We are inspired by his faith, his goodwill, and his devotion to those he loved. His spirit and legacy will forever inspire us to ask good questions, choose the positive in life, and keep our beloveds close. A magnificent human all the way around. xoxo*

Liz Stewart - September 26, 2020 at 06:30 PM



“ I met Steve 7 years ago and from the day we met, I felt we were kindred spirits. Steve was so vibrant and wonderful to be around. I feel like I can still hear his laughter and the sound of him happily whistling a tune. He was incredibly helpful to me as a mentor for my academic career and more importantly, was a caring and supportive friend. Whenever I met up with him, I always left happier, more hopeful, and motivated. He truly was the most positive person I have ever met. He was a rare gem, brilliant, eloquent in how he expressed his thoughts, funny, empathic and caring, and a true joy to be around. People like Steve do not exist - he was a one of a kind, precious gift from G-d. I will keep him close to my heart by holding all of the good memories of the times we shared and the advice he gave - and I will really, really, really miss him. My heart goes out to Peggy, Ingrid, David and his entire family as I know how greatly he loved them all and what a loss his passing is. Warmly,
Val

V - September 24, 2020 at 03:53 PM



“ I met Steve because both my wife Marye Anne and Peggy were cared for in skilled nursing at Querencia. Steve and I had many lunches together with our wives and I was so impressed with his caring devotion to Peggy. But I also often saw them in intimate report on the balcony as I returned to my apartment after a day with my wife.

I have missed Steve as a friend and intellectual companion since the lockdown in March and now he is gone to me and so many others that both admired and loved him. Steve, be well with God. What matters is that you DID make a difference.

Jim Whitesell

James Whitesell - September 23, 2020 at 09:33 PM

“ Dr. Steve Kornguth (1935-2020)

Remembering Steve

I've known Steve for six years now. Both of us in the Department of Kinesiology & Health Education in Belmont Hall. It was always a pleasure to see him and stop and talk with him. If we met in the elevator, passed in the hallway or me stopping by his office, it was a pleasure.

We always made it a point to say good morning and would often shake hands. I once told him, "Steve, I always try to say good morning to you because we never know when it will be the last time." He responded with, "that's right."

Steve was knowledgeable and affable. He was a great conversationalist and I enjoyed the time talking with him.

He was dedicated to his wife and he told me recently how proud he was of his children. Steve added human enrichment to my outlook on life. I'm glad to have known him. I will miss him.

Richard Head

September 21st, 2020

Richard Head - September 23, 2020 at 07:42 AM



“ Steve was one of the very first people that asked to meet with my husband, Elliot, and me after our recruitment to Dell. I came to know him to be one of the most sincere and kind individuals I’ve ever met. After giving my lecture for his wildly successful undergraduate signature course this past year, he offered me a ride back to the outpatient clinic. During that ride he spoke so glowingly of his love of science and teaching but especially his love for his wife that he was almost genuinely shining. The openness and heartfelt words he expressed hit me as one of the most refreshing and soul enlightening conversations I’d had with anyone at Dell in 3 years. He will be truly missed..... as a colleague, a scholar and a gentleman.

Teresa Frohman
DELL

Teresa Cooper-Frohman - September 22, 2020 at 05:42 PM



“ So sad to think that Steve is no longer part of our Kinesiology and Health Education family. He will be deeply missed. I so enjoyed getting to know him over the past 5 years or so, and his love of knowledge was exciting and inspiring to me and many others. He was a terrific colleague. My condolences to his his family, friends and former students.



Jan Todd, Ph.D.
UT-Austin

Jan Todd - September 22, 2020 at 05:15 PM