

Stephen William Burnett

March 12, 1971 ~ November 6, 2025

To Stephen’s Family, I wanted to share a remembrance of your son, your brother, your father—someone who held so much beauty and so much struggle inside the same fragile heart. It feels impossible to put Stephen into words, because he was always more than one thing at once. He was light and shadow, laughter and loneliness, tenderness and turmoil. He was extraordinary, and he was complicated, and he was loved. Stephen had a way of walking into a room and quietly stopping the world. There was something about him—his shoulders, his curls, the way his eyes carried both mischief and melancholy—that made you look twice. He was beautiful in that impossible way that sometimes made people look away, and he never understood that. I once told him it was because he was almost too beautiful, the kind of beautiful that embarrasses people. He laughed, but I think a part of him needed to hear it. He was funny in that dry, sideways, throwaway way—offering little witty lines like gifts he pretended not to be proud of. He danced with this endearing, slightly awkward abandon that always made me smile. He was a cad and a charmer. He loved women, he loved attention, he loved connection—and he also hated being alone, which is why he was always planning breakfasts or drinks with his buddies, always driving across town for a beer with a friend at Bongo Lounge. He adored Over the Counter Café. He adored Elon Musk in a way that baffled and sometimes infuriated people—and the teasing or eye-rolling genuinely hurt him. He wondered why the world could be so unkind to him, not quite able to face how often he attached his heart to unkindness itself, hoping he could pour enough love into it to transform it. Stephen loved fixing things. He had a knack for it. He was smart, perceptive, able to see solutions most people missed. He was equally perceptive about people—seeing them as their higher selves, even when they couldn’t live up to what he saw. When reality didn’t match the beauty he imagined, it cut him deeply. He ran off to Puerto Rico, to Hawaii, to Burning Man—always seeking something, chasing some inner frequency he felt but couldn’t land on. He tried ecstatic dance, medicine journeys, entire new lives. He was a seeker, and he was also someone with holes he couldn’t quite fill, trying everything he could to patch them with connection, with adventure, with substances, with love. Sometimes Stephen looked like the man he wished he could become—especially in those modeling photos, all angles and smolder and story. Other times he looked lost inside his own life. He lived in a world of contradictions, and he loved as best he could from inside them. I hope his passing was peaceful. I hope his spirit felt gentled. I hope he felt free. This weekend, some of us took his oversized grey-brown fur coat into the desert—into sun, into wind, into rain, beneath the stars. We danced with it. We laughed about his quirks. We cried about his contradictions. We offered prayers for his soul. We asked the wind to carry him wherever he hoped to go. We tried to see him whole—messy and marvelous and maddening and tender. Stephen leaves behind silliness and sorrow, brilliance and brokenness, unfinished business and

unforgettable moments. He leaves a hole he didn't know he would create—because he never could quite see how beautiful he truly was, how much he gave just by existing, how enough he already was. My hope is that the most loving parts of him, the funniest parts of him, the parts of him that danced and dreamed and tried—those are the parts we keep. And that his pain, his struggle, his confusion—those we release back into the earth, to be transformed into something gentler. May the best of him live on. May the hardest parts of him finally rest. May his memory be a blessing, in all its complexity and color and contradiction. With love and sincerity, Brooke

- Brooke Lark

We send love and sympathy to Leon and siblings of Stephen Burnett at this difficult time. May you find peace and solace with memories of happy times you had together. Elaine Reiser Alder & Carolyn Reiser Smith, loving Logan Ave. neighbors

- Elaine Reiser Alder and Carolyn Reiser Smith

I am so sorry for your loss. I met Steve in the late 90s when we were both renting rooms from our friend Jim. Steve and I immediately butted heads and did not get along very well. Despite our differences, Steve was apparently raised right. He was always courteous, polite, and respectful (although sometimes very sarcastic). I'm not sure I was as well behaved. However, due to Steve's affability and some mutual friends that caused us to keep running into each other over the years, Steve and I grew past whatever childish differences we had when we met. Since then and over the last 20+ years I have genuinely enjoyed a number of interactions and adventures with Steve and I will miss that. He always greeted me with an almost gleeful tone calling me by a nickname. I will miss that.

- Mark

A dear friend for decades, I am gutted by this complicated and incredible person leaving the world. We are all duller for the loss of his wit, the world is darker for the loss of the brightness of him in it. I now look to the heavens to find his jubilant light in the stars. - TabithaThompsn

- Tabitha Thompson

I met Stephen in May and we quickly became great friends. We had many long, deep talks and shared several adventures in our brief time together (a road trip to Denver, my home town for 4th of July, where he had a life changing experience, Hawaii, Washington and then Burning Man!) We both expected to be friends for life. I'm so heart broken that he's gone. My heart goes out to his children, whom he talked about often and clearly deeply loved. And to his family and friends. He is missed. I love you, Venn! Thank you for the beautiful connection we continue to share!

- Aimee Fuller

Sending my love and support to the entire Burnett family! I know how much he was cherished and loved by his parents, children, siblings, extended family and friends. His early passing is such an incredible loss to sooo many! ■■ Steve was such a kind-hearted soul and a dear friend to me. I'm grateful that our paths crossed. He will be missed!

- Holly Tholstrom Alden

We are so sorry for your loss! Neither one of us have ever experienced the loss of a sibling. Carol lost her mother this year and has been very difficult for her. I can only imagine what you might be going through with the loss of your brother. Know that the Guests love you and your family!

- Curt and Carol Guest

Steve and I were the only two brothers-in-law outside of the Morgan family. I married Mary's sister, Ellison. I always felt that Steve and I held a special bond as brothers-in-law. I've always considered Steve a great friend. We kept in touch up until a week before his passing. I looked up to Steve in many ways. I will truly miss him, and I will cherish the times that we spent together. Steve was an awesome uncle to my six children. He was a master craftsman who taught me a great deal about construction and general "handyman" jobs. It was fun to see the relationship he built with my five boys; he always had a way to make them feel special, and he had a talent to make them smile. Steve was a great friend to all of them. I will certainly miss his friendship and his great personality. Steve will always have a special place in my heart. I know he loved his three children; he always spoke fondly of them. I'll always keep a prayer in my heart for them, and I am looking forward to seeing Steve again one day. My condolences and best regards. Robert G. Green

- Robert Green Brother-in-law

So sorry to hear this. Steve was a good man and a friend to all.

- Steve Ellison

This is a painful time for Stephen’s family, children, & friends. Always know him, love him , for he is with you. ❤■. I went to Highland High school, and somehow our names were mixed up because we shared the same birthday 3/12/1971. As we picked up our schedules and saw the error Stephen asked “Marti may I keep your class schedule “? I said absolutely not after comparing his classes to mine!

- Marti Bingham