

Steven Gregory Parker

July 25, 1968 ~ May 2, 2024

Steven Gregory Parker, a man of profound intellect, remarkable wisdom, unwavering kindness, and boundless curiosity, embarked on his final journey on May 2nd, 2024, leaving behind a legacy of love and innovation that will forever resonate in the hearts of those who knew him. Surrounded by the embrace of his family, Steven passed away peacefully at his home in Draper, Utah, after a battle with brain cancer, closing the chapter of a life richly lived and deeply cherished.

Born to Gregory and Jeanene Parker in Fort Benning, Georgia, Steven's early years were defined by a deep curiosity and desire to learn. As the oldest of eight siblings, he learned the value of compassion, patience, and service from an early age. His upbringing, shaped by love and loyalty, instilled in him a deep sense of family values and hard work that would guide him throughout his life's journey.

It was during his formative years in Norman, Oklahoma, that his passion for learning and exploration truly blossomed. Through self-study and perseverance, he cultivated his abilities in electronics, computers, and art. He developed a passion for classic and exotic automobiles. After school, he could be found fixing, restoring, or racing cars with family and friends, writing code or improving the efficiency of computer programs for his teachers, or creating designs for sports cars and sculpting them in modeling clay. Steven pursued his passions through post-secondary education, earning a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Oklahoma in 1992, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science from the University of Utah in 1999.

His passion for computer graphics led to the creation of state-of-the-art algorithms in real-time ray tracing and related computer graphics fields throughout his career, as well as to multiple patents and “Best Paper” awards. While serving on the faculty at the University of Utah, he created the Center for Interactive Ray-Tracing and Photo Realistic Visualization and later co-founded a start-up called RayScale. Those efforts led him to NVIDIA, where he became the Vice President of Professional Graphics. An expert in high-performance parallel computing, scientific computing, artificial intelligence, and computer graphics, Steven solved problems that many deemed impossible. He was thus recognized by his peers as one of the most talented computer research scientists in the world. He was the technical genius behind NVIDIA’s RTX, real-time ray tracing technology now used in games and movies, which many experts had thought was at least a decade away. Through applied graphics, he made meaningful contributions in the fields of physics, chemistry, and medical science. For his work and service, he received several major awards, including the Honors Medal from Computer World and an honorary doctorate of engineering from the University of Utah. He was also named as one of HPCWire’s “People to Watch.”

Throughout his career, Steven mentored and encouraged the next generation of engineers and computer scientists. Despite his extraordinary professional success, Steven was humble, always acknowledging those who

contributed to projects or supported him through the journey. Of the many colleagues, mentors, family members, and friends who supported Steven, none was more influential than his wife, MeriAnn. She was the love of his life and supported him every step of his journey–particularly the last 7 months of his earthly life–rarely leaving his side. Steven and MeriAnn met in Los Alamos, New Mexico in 1996 and were married in 2001. They found strength and joy in their partnership, forging a bond that outlasts time.

Steven lived a life of service with his family, his church, and his community. He served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Auckland, New Zealand where his spiritual convictions deepened. He served on the board of directors for the Clark Planetarium, as a member of the Engineering National Advisory Council, several program committees for major computer conferences, and on advisory boards for the College of Engineering at the University of Utah. Steven also co-led the campaign committee for the John and Marcia Price Computing and Engineering building at the University of Utah. In 2024, he was awarded a Lifetime Service Award from the Price College of Engineering at the University of Utah for his efforts.

Steven also took time for the small but important moments in life. He was never too busy to spend time with his family, to be a listening ear, or to guide his family with patience and wisdom. Nothing could compete with his love for his wife, MeriAnn, and his four daughters: Morgan, Alyssa, Amber, and Elena. He was always present at special events in his children's and grandchildren's lives and enjoyed spending time with them doing things they found important or interesting. He also shared his passions with his family. They were often outdoors –skiing, cycling, or exploring new places. He enjoyed traveling with them, finding unique and quirky sights, and experiencing exceptional cuisine. As a culinary enthusiast with an adventurous palate, he also enjoyed cooking with his family. He found joy in experimenting with new recipes, savoring exotic flavors, and sharing the gift of food with those he loved. His kitchen was a place where memories were made, and traditions were honored.

In addition to being a devoted husband and father, Steven cherished time with his parents, brothers, sisters, and extended family. He loved both of his parents and all of his siblings. Steven learned about cars, computers, and putting others first from his dad. His mother taught him to be strong through hard times and to hold onto his faith. Growing up, Steven had a unique connection with his younger brother, Mike. They were inseparable, working on hobbies and hanging out together with friends. As adults, they would often be found sharing inside jokes and solving the problems of the world in hushed conversations. Not only were they brothers, they were best friends. Steven also had a special bond with his Grandma Edna, which developed when he lived with her as a young child and again in college. He honored her by keeping strong connections with his extended family, as well as organizing and hosting family reunions. His legacy of compassion and generosity will continue to inspire all who were fortunate enough to know him.

Steven knew who he was and didn't waver from what inspired him. Throughout his life, he was committed to and enjoyed spending time with his childhood friends. He loved penguins, Energy Vitamin Water, Robert Graham clothing, biking, skiing, driving fast cars, being outdoors, and all things related to his favorite color, purple. Forever in our hearts, Steven's memory will guide us to live each day intentionally with altruism, loyalty, compassion, and a thirst for discovery.

Steven is survived by his wife, MeriAnn Parker, his children, Morgan (Nathan) Mabey, Alyssa (Brian) Vance, Amber Parker, and Elena Parker, his grandchildren James Ashdown, Makayla Ashdown, Zoe Ashdown, Maximus Vance, and Amelia Vance, his parents, Jeanene Hale and Gregory Parker, his siblings, Michael (Katie) Parker, Sheryl Tatum (Bret) Bradley, Jennifer Horn, Tamara Parker, Marilyn (Alen) Howard, William (Christine) Parker, and Christopher (Christy) Parker, his parents-in-law Ronaele and Larry Freestone, his sisters-in-law, Sheri (Justin) Swart, Keri (Kenneth) Martinez, and Lori (Neil) Sood, and many aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins.

He is preceded in death by his four grandparents, Byron Nelson Parker, Edna Matilda Dalton, Ernest Carlyle Hale, and Alice Chaus, his brother-in-law Kelly Raymond Horn (Jennifer), his sister-in-law Rebecca Marie Parker (William), and several aunts, uncles, and cousins.

A celebration of Steven's life will be held on Saturday, May 18th, at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at 1911 East Gray Fox Drive, Draper, Utah. Closed-casket visitation will take place from 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM, followed by a family meeting and prayer from 10:30 AM to 11:00 AM, and a funeral service from 11:00 AM to 12:30

PM. He will be laid to rest at Valley View Memorial Park, 4335 West 4100 South, West Valley City, Utah. Please wear purple in honor of Steven.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the Steven G. Parker Memorial Scholarship at https://price.utah.edu/parker

To watch the services remotely via Zoom please click the blue "Watch Services" tab at the top of the obituary.