

*In Memory of*

# William Clarence Stewart, Jr.

September 24, 1952 - Monday, September 17, 2012

## Obituary



WILLIAM CLARENCE STEWART, JR

ASHEVILLE - William (Jay) Clarence Stewart Jr., 60, of Asheville, N.C. and Ft. Myers, Fla., died on Monday, September 17, 2012, after a courageous battle against cancer. His beloved wife of 32 years Nancy was by his side.

Jay was born in Frankfurt, Germany on September 24, 1952 to Bill and Betty Stewart. He spent his early life growing up in Germany and Northern Virginia. His family's travel experiences would inspire him with a love of travel and adventure that would continue until the end of his life. He graduated from Berlin American High School while his father was stationed in Germany. When the family returned to the States, he enrolled at Hamilton College and later at the College of William and Mary. It was there, while walking across a bridge on campus, that he met Nancy Birdsong Joyner who would become his wife and the love of his life. They were married in 1979 in Williamsburg, Va. at historic Bruton Parish Church.

Jay and Nancy began their married life by traveling west in a small travel trailer to explore the West Coast. They settled in San Jose, California, where Jay began acquiring experience in real estate appraisal, investment, and development. After five years honing his skills in real estate, they decided to come back to the East Coast to be closer to family and friends and start another phase of their life together. In keeping with his spirit, he decided they would get back to the East Coast by continuing west. He and Nancy visited the Orient, India, the Middle East and Europe. They saw new places, as well as places Jay wanted to show Nancy that he had been to as a youth. It was a memorable trip that they would talk of often.

When they returned to the East Coast, they chose Asheville, N.C. for its mild climate, dramatic mountain scenery, and breath of creativity that existed there. In Asheville, Jay continued to expand on his real estate knowledge and experience working for a number of years at Beverly-Hanks and Associates. Upon leaving Beverly-Hanks, Jay and two partners established business parks in Woodfin and Black Mountain by renovating former industrial facilities. Jay considered these business parks to be incubators for small private businesses and he took particular pride in his part in leasing space to people who brought innovative ideas and jobs to the Asheville area. He was a mentor to many of his tenants, who respected his business acumen and humor. He believed in the early re-development of downtown Asheville and helped bring to the community Asheville's first micro-brewery Highland Brewing, housed in Barley's Taproom on Biltmore Avenue.

As a member of the Asheville community for 28 years, he was a participant in Leadership Asheville and served on the boards of Habitat for Humanity, WCQS Radio, WNC Tennis

Association, Eagle Market Street, and Black Mountain Economic Development. He was a NC licensed realtor and a real estate appraiser. He also loved tennis and was a formidable opponent on the court.

Even though they settled in Asheville, Jay and Nancy still found time to travel frequently, staying at Goat Island near Charleston, S.C. and Fort Meyers, Florida, where he had fond memories of spending time with his parents.

Jay never met a stranger and valued the friendships of many people, not just in Asheville but those he had touched around the world. His smile was always there to greet you and he made you feel like you were important. He spent many hours entertaining family and friends with a multitude of selections he played on his beloved guitar. His love of his family, friends, and life never diminished during his illness; he left this life with courage, grace, and that unforgettable gleam in his eye.

Survivors include his wife, Nancy J. Stewart; his mother, Elizabeth B. Stewart of Albany, Ga.; three sisters, Deborah Naquin and husband, Doug, of Ashburn, Va., Patricia Underdahl and husband, Ron, of Albany, Ga., and Helen Banks and husband, Jim, of Calabasas, Calif.; three nieces, Kelly Underdahl Powell and husband, Aaron, Kaely Naquin Davis and Julie Naquin; and two nephews, Brian Underdahl and wife, Samantha Paustian-Underdahl, and Ronnie Underdahl; one great-nephew, Gavin Powell and one great-niece, Abby Powell. Additionally; he is survived by his father-in-law, Dick Joyner of Durham, N.C.; sister-in-law, Elizabeth Taylor and husband, Jeff, of Richmond, Va.; and brother-in-law, Rick Joyner of Cary, N.C.; niece, Morgan Joyner and nephew, Richardson Joyner.

A private gathering will be held to celebrate Jay's life at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity, 33 Meadow Rd., Asheville, NC 28803, [www.ashevillehabitat.org](http://www.ashevillehabitat.org); or, Tumor Bank of WNC, 40 North Merrimon Ave., Suite 302, Asheville, NC 28804.

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