

STEPHANIE "STEVIE" WILSON RAYBORN

Arrived 3:52 AM on October 2, 1984

Departed 5:57 PM on April 25, 2017

Eulogy



Thank you all for coming, for all your prayers and hugs that have kept us strong during this terrible void created by the sudden departure of our precious daughter, Stephanie. Her Mother and I, and her sisters (Monica & Kelly), and all her nieces called her "Stevie". Stevie has always called her Mother, "Mim".

Stevie would have adored this! All this love and all these people gathered together just for her. Her mother and I thank you for all the beautiful flowers and donations to 'SAFE' pet rescue. Stevie loved the stage; and here she is right at the center of it. And, sharing her life with you will be woefully inadequate in capturing the spirit of my beautiful, *feisty* and amazing young daughter. A short life, that was exceptionally well lived.

Born 3.52 AM on October 2, 1984 she came into the world determined to make her presence felt; and from an early age she filled the room with her radiance. Only 5'1", an infectious smile, blue eyes and blonde hair she was witty, charming and incredibly intelligent...she was such a nut...she made us laugh. Stevie was high energy and "on purpose" from the time she was a little girl, and throughout her adulthood. She took her first steps at 11 months and never slowed down! She was independent from an early age; when we tried to dress her or help her with anything she would protest, "I do it, I do it"!

Stevie gave her life to Jesus at an early age. She looked forward to attending bible camp every summer; one of her most favorite times. She always had lots of questions about the mysteries of the bible, and of life and death. I remember she was overtaken when she read James 4:14; "whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." She dwelt on that a long time.

At 14 she went to Europe for 2 weeks with a group of honor students; two chosen from each state in the country. When she returned, she decided she wanted to play the Sax or Clarinet in the school band, so her mother took her to a music store to find out all the details and let her try out a horn. Ten minutes later she's had enough of that and decided that now she would learn karate instead. And, she'd made up her mind! By the time she was 16 she was a black belt in Shaolin Kempo martial arts, and a martial arts judge and kick-boxing instructor for another two years before graduating from high school.

Stevie always wanted to be a Florida Gator! She was accepted by the University of Florida and graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice in only 3 years; there she was also a member of the Criminal Justice and Law Honor Society. She loved being a Gator...they won 5 national championships her senior year and she made sure everyone knew about it. While attending UF she went to Rome for 7 weeks on a foreign studies program. She spoke fluent Spanish and Italian. After graduating from UF she earned a Master of Science degree in Criminology from University of Central Florida, a two year program that she completed in just one year.

But, by the time Stevie graduated the economy had taken a downturn so she came home and announced that she had enlisted in the Navy. That did not sit well with her Mother given all that was going on in the Middle East at the time. Her uncle, Col. Donald Power, US Army Retired, sponsored her into Officer Candidate School where she graduated and received a commission as an Ensign in January of 2009. Before she left to attend OCS she saved the Navy the chore of cutting her long thick blonde hair; she had it cut and donated to "Locks of Love" to make wigs for cancer victims. In the following years Stevie completed two tours in the Middle East, one aboard the missile cruiser USS San Jacinto and another aboard the guided missile destroyer, USS Gravelly. She was promoted to Lt. JG and then to LT in March of 2013. She spent the last year serving as a Military Liaison Officer and Post Afloat Destroyer Department Head at Defense Logistics Agency in San Diego, California.

I'd like to read an excerpt from a letter we received from her Commanding Officer... *"Stephanie was a respected and dedicated naval officer who honored her country*

and the naval service by the work she did and her contributions throughout her naval career. Her pleasant and humorous personality, coupled with her expertise, made an immediate impact on those around her. She quickly gained the friendship and respect of peers and subordinates, and had a reputation in the fleet as a hard charger and dedicated naval officer. This is an important and positive certainty that we all can appreciate as we wrestle with the mysteries of life” – John Soracco, CAPT United States Navy.

Stevie married [Stephen Aaron Rayborn](#) in November of 2011. They shared their lives together in Norfolk, VA and then in Chula Vista, CA near Naval Base Coronado, with their two dogs “Trigger & Shotzy”. Stevie called them her “fur babies”. She had a name for everything. Her first automobile, a Ford Explorer was named “Harrison”, her Crown Victoria, “Old Princessa” and her new Ford Fusion, “Bianca”. Her cats, Darling and Georgiana, she called “Miss Perfection Mimi” and “Little G”. She liked Britney Spears music and loved to garden; was a gourmet cook and loved eggplant pizza & white bean turkey chili, good wine, fine restaurants, and Victoria Secrets. She would tell you that her favorite instrument to play was the “remote control”. Above all, Stevie was passionate about life and everything she did. She genuinely cared about and enjoyed helping other people, and loved animals.

Some months back she sent me a Ralph Waldo Emerson quote, which I’d like to share ...*“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be passionate; to have it make some difference that you have lived, and lived well”.*

There is a long history of military challenge coins. It is a small coin or medallion (usually military), bearing an organization’s or unit’s insignia and is carried by its members. Among other uses, the coins have been given to those individuals by commanders or members of other units in recognition of a person’s character, excellence in achievement or extraordinary deeds. I remember that Stevie was so excited when she received her first coin by a Sr. Chief and Navy Diver aboard the USS San Jacinto, after a piracy interdiction. She received her last two coins in death, one from Chief Petty Officer Juan Scull, and another by the organization “Life Givers”, both were given in recognition of her selflessness. Stevie was an organ donor, and on Tuesday and Wednesday of last week she saved 4 lives, and improved that of many more.

We are especially proud of her, and we must say goodbye too soon!

We miss her.

Because she's not here for us to listen to about her day.

Because she's not here to encourage and congratulate.

Because she's not here to touch and hug.

Because she's not here to spend time with.

Because she's not here to argue with.

Because she's not here to share a drink with.

Because she's not here to laugh with.

Because she's not here to pray with.

She is with her Grandpa and Grandma, and now they get to laugh and argue with her. And tease, "What a Nut!"

Goodbye Sweetie! We love you forever!