



## Obituary

Stephen Edward Cole

April 18, 1947 – November 25, 2012

We were blessed. We were lucky. We were chosen. Steve Cole was our father, our brother, our cousin, our friend. And he was married to the woman he fell in love with across a very small enchanted room at a Christmas party in Worland almost exactly 38 years ago. He loved her fiercely, tenderly, and sometimes beyond her own comprehension.

Steve was a man who lived a dream. He served as the federal magistrate judge in Yellowstone National Park for 31 years---

a job, he said hundreds of times, for which God created him. And he was beloved of in-law aunts who weren't always gentle judges of the people who were brought into their family. He was a special man.

Stephen Edward Cole was born in the "old hospital" in Powell, WY, on April 18, 1947. His mother grew up in Powell and returned there to birth her first son because there was no hospital in Riverton. He and his wife, Maurine Hinckley-Cole, retired to Powell in May 2012, Steve quietly proffering all the while that the city ought to erect a statue of him, a native son returning. He died of heart failure in the "new" Powell hospital on November 25, 2012, with his wife and son by his side.

Steve was the first of four boys born within 5 ½ years to Joan Elizabeth Luse and John Robert Cole. He often spoke with pride of his beautiful and barely five-foot-tall mother who had to be full of grit and vinegar to keep her four sons from killing each other while their dad was on the road. And he loved the story about his dad's cousins from Canada making the long trek to Riverton, WY, to gaze upon this wondrous child who held the promise of perpetuating the Cole name.

This wondrous child was not given much to smiling. There was a neighbor who made it his life's work to coax a smile out of little Stevie Cole. He never could do it. When Stevie was much older, one of his own little girls asked him how come he didn't smile very much. He replied, "I'm jumping up and down for joy inside, darlin'."

Steve graduated from Riverton High School in 1965. One of the highlights of his high school years was playing in a band with his two best friends, Bill and Charley. He always professed to being nothing more than the comic relief, but no one loved the music more than he. Many times he said that if life were fair, God would have given him the musical talent to go along with his secret desire to be a rock 'n' roll guitar player.

After high school, Steve went to Arizona State University for a year. He thought he needed to kick himself out of the nest far enough that he couldn't return to Riverton with his laundry every weekend. And though he discovered multitudes of bronze, beautiful, and very rich girls in Arizona, he found that he longed for the seasons of Wyoming. He returned to the University of Wyoming and graduated with a degree in English. After he graduated, he returned to Riverton where someone asked him what he was going to do now. He replied without any hint of a smile that he was planning to open an English store. The person seemed fully satisfied with that.

Steve really didn't have a clue about what he was going to do with the rest of his life. He always said that he was just a piece of wood drifting down the river of life.

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## Service Summary

### Memorial Service

02:00 PM Fri Nov 30, 2012

Location: - *Not available* -

No plan. No goal. No control. When the wood got sucked into a whirlpool or thrown out on the bank, he figured that's the way it was supposed to be. In his case, he was diagnosed with hypoglycemia after passing out in Shawver's Drug Store in Laramie next to the sunglasses display. At the time, the diagnosis was enough to keep him from getting drafted into the army. So what next? He went to Oregon where his brother, Terry, was going to optometry school. He worked in a grocery store bagging groceries---the oldest, most over-qualified bagger they had. He worked in a prune factory and learned the hard way that he couldn't eat as many of them as he wanted. He sold encyclopedias door-to-door for a while, but as you can imagine, he really wasn't cut out for that. He worked as a greens-keeper on a golf course and loved that job enough that he thought perhaps he should stay there forever. But something inside nudged him to go back to school. Several of his friends were returning from Vietnam and entering law school. He figured "Why not try that? I wouldn't have to think about making any big decisions for another three years." That was life on the Steve Cole plan. He got his first job out of law school with Jack Langdon in Worland. Worland wasn't the place of his dreams, but he thought he'd work there for a while until he could go somewhere he really wanted to be. He started his job in September 1974. In December he went to a Christmas party and when "she" walked through the door, it was love at first sight. HE was sitting on the floor dressed in a blue-gray ribbed turtleneck, wearing round wire-rimmed glasses, and sporting the nicest looking mustache she had ever seen. SHE walked through the door dressed in black velvet with chestnut-colored hair hanging to her waist. They were drawn to one another and spent the next 38 years as a couple. 35 married years. August 27, 1977, was their most wondrous wedding day.

The hypoglycemia turned into full-blown, insulin-dependent diabetes when Steve was 28 years old. From that point on, he lived with the ravages of that terrible disease. It stole his eyes, his heart, his kidneys---but never his wit, his fine mind, his sense of humor, his absolute genius for recalling facts. And he never complained. He often wondered about people who said "why me?" His attitude was always "why NOT me; am I special?"

As the diabetes slowly began to claim his body, Steve and Maurine had their first child, Sophia. It was 1981 and Steve had just landed the job he was created for. The little family left Worland for Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, when Sophia was 10 days old. They lived in the first stone house built in Yellowstone for the next 31 years and filled it with two more children, Stephanie and Ethan.

If Steve were writing this himself, he would definitely mention a couple of things about his life which he considered important. He would want everyone to know that he received a new kidney from his wife in 1994 and that it was the only good organ left in his body. He would want everyone to know about his most very special awesome relationship with his granddaughter, Lazuli. He would want everyone to know that his daughters are intelligent and capable women who know how to choose good men. That his son has become a fine man of faith and integrity. And he would want everyone to know that he, Steve Cole, has been sober for nine years.

Brother-in-law Schuyler said once that Steve Cole was not only the most interesting, but also the most interested person he had ever known. It's true. He was interested in everything. And such a marvelous sense of humor. At Thanksgiving, just the other day, he said that he really hated to leave this mortal coil without ever getting to have just one sip of Wyoming Whiskey. And he always said that when his time came, we would see him driving away from us toward the great hereafter in his 1965 bird-egg blue Ford Fairlane 500 with the windows rolled down, the rock 'n' roll music turned up as high as it would go, and an arm out the window waving goodbye. We like that vision.

Steve Cole was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, Ron; and his sister-in-law Laney. He is survived by his wife, Maurine; three children, Sophia, Stephanie, and Ethan; two special sons-in-law, Sophia's Chris and Stephanie's Chris; four grandchildren, Lazuli, Amber, Evan, and Asher; two brothers, Terry (sister-in-law Sandy) and Jon; multitudes of in-laws, nieces, nephews, cousins, friends, and dogs who will forever cherish the fact that he was a part of their lives. A friend said, "I can't imagine a world without Steve Cole in it." Neither can we. Steve cut part of an obituary out of the Billings Gazette several years ago that has hung on our refrigerator ever since. "I want to be taken up on the hill. Be drifted away on the breeze. I'll be here when the first bird sings in the spring. I'll be the butterfly. You'll see me in the water, and you'll feel me on your face when the wind blows. I'm not afraid to die."

God bless you, Steve Cole. You will never, no not ever, be forgotten. A memorial service will be held at 2 PM, Friday, November 30, 2012, in the Mammoth Chapel at Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. Memorial donations in Steve's name may be sent to: Yellowstone Association, PO Box 117, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190. Thompson Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements and condolences may be sent to the family at [www.thompsonfuneral.net](http://www.thompsonfuneral.net) or P.O. Box 807, Powell, WY 82435