

Steve Rehn Eulogy

Walter Steven Rehn was born on **December 23, 1974** in Mayo, Yukon. Steve's parents Rick and Linn were living in Dawson City at the time, but, because there was no doctor in the town they had to travel 200 km. in – 40 degree weather to get to a small hospital in Mayo. And so even from the beginning, Steve was on an adventure!

As a young boy his mom recalls how Steve always loved her to read to him and how he was so excited to go to Grade 1 because he'd been told that in school he would learn to read. After his first day at school he was utterly disappointed because he hadn't yet learned to read, a feeling that mounted over the next few months until it was discovered that Steve needed glasses. His mom writes: *"I remember the day they arrived in the mail. He put them on and could read instantly! He'd been absorbing everything the teacher had been saying even though he couldn't see the blackboard"*

At a young age Steve learned the great gift of literacy and passing on that gift would become an important part of his life and work. Steve believed that learning to read could change a person's life.

In **1981** the family moved to Calgary and a year later in **1982** Steve went public with his faith in Jesus Christ and was baptized. His faith convictions deeply shaped all dimensions of his life and Steve never lost sight of his need for grace and where to find it.

After graduating from high school in **1992**, Steve attended Alberta Bible College. His heart for missions was stirred there while on a trip to Thailand during the summer of **1993**.

It was in **1995**, however, that he first went to Africa and began what would become a continual back-and-forth trek that would last for the rest of his life. His first summer was to Benin where, in one village he visited, there were boxes of New Testaments in the people's language collecting dust in the corner – simply because the people couldn't read. It was at that moment he received the vision that steered his passion for literacy, setting the course for his entire life in his beloved Africa.

Another lifelong passion of Steve was cycling and it was at a Bike for Bibles event across Canada on **Aug 27, 1996** where he met his third passion, his bride-to-be Nicki.

In the **Spring of '97** Steve wrote Nicki's father asking for permission to date his daughter but he received no answer. Another month passed, then 3 with still no answer. Later they discovered that the mailbox had been set on fire and the police had been keeping his letter for evidence!

But during that 3 months Steve didn't sit around, waiting. He went to the Ivory Coast for a one year internship from 1997 to 1998 and in 1998 graduated from Alberta Bible College with a Bachelor of Religious Education: International Studies. But because he was mostly planning to graduate from the bachelor state, he worked fast to raise enough money to buy a plane ticket to Australia and be with Nicki. They were married on **November 28, 1998**, on the beach at Bunbury, West Australia.

During the next year in Australia, Steve worked for FedEx delivering parcels. It was full of new experiences. He had never driven in country whose people drove on the opposite side of the road, had never driven stick shift and had never seen Perth, a city of 1 million people.

Upon their return to Canada, Steve went to Langley, BC where he began specific training for Literacy and then on to Quebec City in 1999-2000 to study French.

Feb 2001 Steve and Nicki moved to Abengourou, Ivory Coast, West Africa where they were part of a small team of church planters doing literacy work along with a team of Anyi men that Steve trained and mentored. These were memorable and challenging times; Steve and Nicki were actually robbed 3 times in 3 months. Then, in the **Fall of 2002** they were forced to evacuate because of civil war and Steve- ever diligent - used the time to upgrade his French.

From 2003 to 2005 they went to Yaounde, Cameroon, West Africa where Nicki taught in the Rainforest International School and Steve was in charge of literacy projects in the Eastern provinces traveling by bus, pickup truck, foot, and even canoe. Each summer from **2004 onward**, Steve taught the Mega Literacy course to African men and women who were leaders of national literacy projects, 3 years in Kenya and the last 2 years in Burkina Faso.

In 2005 they returned to Calgary so that Nicki could get her Canadian citizenship. Steve continued his missions focus by leading the Global Impact Team at Oak Park Church of Christ while he worked delivering dry-wall and cycling as much as possible.

In early **July, 2008**, Steve left Calgary to teach year two of the Mega Literacy course for Wycliffe Bible Translators held in Burkina Faso, West Africa. This Masters level course is for national leaders of major literacy programs and was taught in French. There were 25 students from 9 countries taking the course.

When the course ended at the beginning of September, he started on his long-dreamed-of bicycle trip across 4,000 kilometers of pot-hole roads, scattered with unknown and unplanned stopping points, opportunities to try all sorts of local food, innumerable bike problems and much anticipated visits to many of his students along the way to see their projects. Steve was overjoyed, exuberant and at peace.

On **September 26, 2008** Steve was riding his bike in Nigeria when a car took a corner too fast, lost control and struck Steve. Steve instantly passed from this world to the next.

On **November 1**, this year Steve would have received his Master of Linguistics degree from Trinity Western University. He was to have been awarded "MA in Linguistics Outstanding Student Award," which is "presented annually to the student who best exemplifies both academic excellence and fulfillment of the MA in Linguistics program objectives; instead, on **September 26** he graduated from a life well lived to a reward beyond capability of description.

Steve is survived by his wife Nicki, his parents Rick and Linn, his sister Ali and her husband Redge, his brother Dave, Dave's wife Wendy and his nephew, Cai.

Steve's impact was truly a global one. He made friends wherever he went – and he went a lot of places. His compassionate and tender heart mixed with his adventuresome spirit, crazy sense of humor and delightful smile made him instantly likable. Steve truly accepted people and was pleased to serve them. His deep desire was to be a man of godly character, a loving husband and faithful follower of Jesus. As a result, he shone as a bright example of authenticity and love in action. Steve lived his life fully and well. He followed in the footsteps of Christ and as a result Steve's footprints continue to be seen across the world.