

MEMORIES OF STEVE - THE EARLY YEARS. By Ernie Bies Aug. 29, 2015

I want to thank Nicole for asking me to speak about my friend Steve today. It's a great honour. My condolences to Nicole, Stephanie, Melanie and their families.

If Steve was here he'd start with a joke to lighten things up. He'd want us to remember the good times. If you were at a party and there was a lot of laughter going on in one corner you could be sure that Steve was at the centre of it.

I first met Steve in 1954, more than 60 years ago, when he came out to our farm with his brother John who had other reasons to visit. Steve and I would ride our pony, Trigger and I think Steve envied our farm life and I certainly envied his life in town. We became good friends and came to call each other brother in Slovak. Brati.



My sister Anne sends her regrets. She would have been here but had a minor complication with her new pacemaker and had to have a tune up on Thursday so can't travel for a while.

Steve was a role model for me. He got me hooked on collecting comics, coins and stamps. He even taught me a few tricks about sending away for free stamps. Then they would send us stamps that we were supposed to pay for but we just ignored them and they eventually stopped sending them. I still have a lot of those stamps in a box somewhere. I bet Steve does too.

Steve was a very smart guy who figured things out himself and did not have much patience for school work. His classroom became the Pool Hall and he was soon driving a new car as a result of his skills. Some of his friends here have stories about that car.



Later Steve got his pilot's licence and bought a plane. One winter day he took me up for my first flight in a small plane and we flew all over town, down to Bradlo and Lac Ste Therese. We stayed out longer than we had planned and by the time we got back it was dark. Steve did not have instrument training and there were no lights at the airstrip. Two things he forgot to tell me beforehand. We flew in and he made a perfect landing in the dark by the light of the moon reflected on

the snow banks on the sides of the airstrip. Then he looked over at me and said "Geez, I've never done that before"

Since then he has owned a half dozen planes and flown everywhere in Canada including the Arctic. He bought his last plane in Whitehorse a few years ago and flew it across Canada.



Steve had a unique style. When Sandy met him for the first time one Christmas he cracked open a bottle on Canadian Club and threw the cap away saying "we won't need that any more" and we didn't.

One of his first jobs was as a junior ranger with the Lands and Forests and it required that he visit the various fire towers along the rail line on a speeder or Motor Car. Chummy Trowse sent him to Cochrane to take the CN exam to become a licensed motor car operator. In Cochrane he was told to go to this rail car where they ran him through several tests in math, public relations, letter writing and problem solving and he finally asked why he needed these tests to drive a motor car. The examiner then realized that Steve was in the wrong rail car and he had taken the tests for a dispatcher which he had passed with flying colours.



The examiner said "you're not going anywhere" and offered him a job at twice what he was making at the Lands and Forests so Steve had to go back and tell Chummy that he needed to find a new junior ranger.

So his long and successful career began with the CNR. When he signed up they asked him for his middle name. He didn't have one so he adopted Ernie as his middle name. My middle name is Steve so I guess he thought that was appropriate.

He started in Hearst, then went to Hornepayne and steadily climbed the ladder at CN till he retired in a very senior position. After he retired he worked as a railway consultant in Canada and even in Africa.

I always admired his spirit of adventure, his sense of humour, his gift of the gab, his creativity and workmanship, most of all, his dance moves.



He was a good friend.
Steve, moi brat, may the wind
lift your wings and the moon
and the snow guide your path
forever.

Steve Siska

Dec. 19, 1942 - July 11, 2015