



Stephen Paul Dempster

April 26, 1962 - March 22, 2023

Stephen Paul Dempster died peacefully on the morning of March 22, 2023 in Dartmouth at the age of 60, after a very brief illness. He was surrounded by his loving family. Steve was, in the truest sense of the words, a seeker, artist and creator. His love of music, particularly guitar, in which he was classically trained from a young age, defined him for everyone who knew and loved him. His musicianship, natural teaching ability, and unique calm demeanor connected him with countless students and peers throughout his life. Steve was a self-starter; he founded the Dempster Guitar Studio (now Guitar Evolutions) in 1995, fulfilling his passions and beginning his legacy.

Steve's family moved from Belfast in 1964, and settled in Manitoba and then Nova Scotia. His appreciation of family and traditions began at a very young age from his loving mum Irene. His and his sister Pam's childhoods were filled with Saturday morning wake-ups to the smell of bacon & pancakes, and homemade bread, scones and butter tarts were regular fare. Watching the 1951 version of A Christmas Carol became an enduring tradition. He loved Spider-Man and Jaws his whole life. The sounds of the band Rush were heard in the air for hours on end as Steve taught himself to play almost every song they wrote.

From a young age, Steve had a love for all things horror, which he successfully passed onto his sons and other family. Beginning with his own

handmade haunted houses in his youth (for which he charged a dime admission), he loved putting together our outside Halloween display. He hand-built wildly impressive graveyard designs, complete with tombs, pillars, and an immersive lightning, fog, and music show. Gradually adding more with the help of his family each year, he managed to scare away at least one or two kids every Halloween night, and impressed anyone who dared enter Rocklin Graves. Storage became an issue, but it was worth it. The 1978 horror classic, Halloween, was a staple in the Dempster household because of him, and not just on October 31.

Steve was involved for several years in the world of outdoor leadership, including the Youth Leadership Council and Project SEED, inspiring young people to take risks, develop skills, believe in themselves and serve others. He was selected to be an Outward Bound instructor after completing their training program in Ontario, although he chose another path. Steve was a facilitator at one particular leadership camp, where he met the participant who eventually became his wife of 25 years. He pursued rock climbing and martial arts with his trademark thirst for excellence, earning his black belt in tae kwon do in the 1990s.

He was driven by a passion for precision in art, in all its forms; Steve had a natural talent for painting, drawing, design of all kinds, craftsmanship, and had an inspiring imagination. A natural problem-solver, he made things happen (including, despite knotty logistical issues, putting in a clothesline that will likely outlast our house, because his wife really wanted one). Although his follow-through sometimes needed work, when he did something, he did it well.

He was deeply inspired by the beauty of nature and the universe, both spiritually and scientifically, and shared this with his sons, drawing simple diagrams explaining black holes and dark matter to them. In fact, he was watching a documentary about fungi with his son before his death. He loved

camping, canoeing, skipped rocks impressively well, and was a natural distance runner. Family hikes, outings to pick apples and strawberries, visits to Hennigar's in Wolfville and regular Sunday family gatherings were part of the fabric of our years together.

Steve escaped death more than once through his lifetime, and made the most of the time he had. He is survived by his sons, Evan (21) and Seamus (19), his wife, Lara, his sister, Pam (Michael Gervais) and their children Emily and Ben. He deeply loved his dogs, Juneau and Winslow (and those who came before them), and they were firmly part of the family. Lara's

mother, Sue Robinson, sisters Tania DesRoches and Kari Robinson, her brother, Jay Robinson and their spouses and children all enjoyed his music, impassioned discussions, somewhat spotty sense of humour and willingness to help. He shared lifelong friendships with Scott MacKinnon and Todd Masters.

Steve never got back to Ireland, and had other, unfulfilled dreams, but we will make sure we get there and carry his spirit with us. We promise to continue his legacy of curiosity & thirst for understanding, living creatively & with passion, drinking endless cups of tea, and appreciating simple pleasures.

Steve's Celebration of Life. Will take place Sunday April 30, 2023 from 10:00 am - 12:00 Noon in the Halifax Independent School's Multipurpose Room.

Thanks to the ER and ICU staff at Dartmouth General, who took wonderful care of him and us (especially nurse Joan). A celebration of life is planned for the near future- check back for details. In lieu of flowers, contact kevinjdesroches@gmail.com regarding a planned bursary fund for music students in need or donate to the SPCA.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

APR **30**. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (AST)

Halifax Independent School
3331 Connaught Ave
Halifax, NS B3L 3B4 (CA)

Tribute Wall

LO

“ So sorry for your loss. Sending light in these challenging times.

Love - April 10, 2025 at 03:47 PM

DR

“ Lara, I am so sad to hear about Stephen's passing. Stephen was my first guitar instructor back around the mid to late 1990's. I was in some group classes at Northcliffe Centre as well as individual instruction at the Nova Scotia Conservatory. Stephen was an awesome guy and guitar instructor. I will always remember him playing his 12 string guitar when I was still trying to learn my six string. I was in total awe of his guitar playing. Stephen was my inspiration to start learning guitar. I will always remember Stephen's calm and friendly character and I am so thankful that I had him as a great instructor. My deepest condolences to you, Lara, and your sons, Evan and Seamus.

Daron Ryan - April 26, 2023 at 05:11 PM

JB

“ Lara, I was so sad to hear that Stephen passed. He will always be one of the people who made such a difference in the course of my life by introducing me to guitar and music theory. I followed him from the time that you lived on Yale street in Halifax, to your current address, and took steady lessons with him for 6 years! My first guitar, a special edition Washburn, was one he sold me and it's still in great condition! I really liked his philosophy of life, and that was to live each day to the fullest. he would say “a every day you wake up and your still alive, is a good day”. Know that I will honour his spirit by lifting my guitar each day, and remembering what he taught me. To you Lara, and your sons, Evan and Seamus, hugs, and my sincerest condolences.

Joanna Butler - April 24, 2023 at 04:38 PM

JD

“Lara, Evan and Seamus ... so very sad to hear of this immeasurable loss - to your family, the community, and Steve's large network of music and creative friends. So many words can be used to describe Steve and the stamp that he's left on so many lives; but one that comes to mind for me is 'authentic'. No matter the circumstance that may have brought Steve into your life, he was always there with authenticity. He was the real deal, with nothing about him contrived. The world needs more Steve's. His support of my creative interests in years past is greatly appreciated, and will be a lasting, fond memory for me. Hugs and sincere condolences. Joe Doiron.

Joe Doiron - April 16, 2023 at 10:23 AM

JO

“I will be forever grateful for the lasting imprint that Stephen and his family left within me. The love shared amongst them was palpable, kind and gentle. Thank you for permitting me to be part of that, even briefly. With great love, there is great loss. I sense that all of you will rest in his love often, as you move forward in life, and the living of it.

Joan - April 04, 2023 at 10:38 AM

PD



Pamela Dempster - April 23, 2023 at 10:11 AM



“Dear Dempsters, we never met but I've been so sad since hearing the news. Steve helped me answer emails from my guitar students and loved him very much. We never met in person unfortunately but I will deeply miss him.
Much love from Colorado

David Wallimann - April 01, 2023 at 01:54 AM

JD

“ Lara, Evan, Seamus - I am so saddened to hear of Steve's passing. My memories of Steve will be similar to those of many others, surrounded by his music and the love of his family. My thoughts are with you all through this difficult time.

Julia Davis - March 31, 2023 at 02:38 PM

PC

“ Dear Lara and family. I was so sorry to hear about your husband. Thinking of you all during this difficult time.
Patti Casavechia

Patti Casavechia - March 31, 2023 at 01:53 PM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Stephen Paul Dempster.



March 31, 2023 at 07:30 AM

MM

“ Lara, Evan and Seamus, I am so saddened to hear of Steve's passing. I have such fond memories of growing up next door, learning guitar from him and his Halloween cemetery masterpiece. He was a kind soul and a bright light on our street. Thinking of you and sending you strength during this difficult time - Melissa Mackley

Melissa Mackley - March 30, 2023 at 07:55 AM

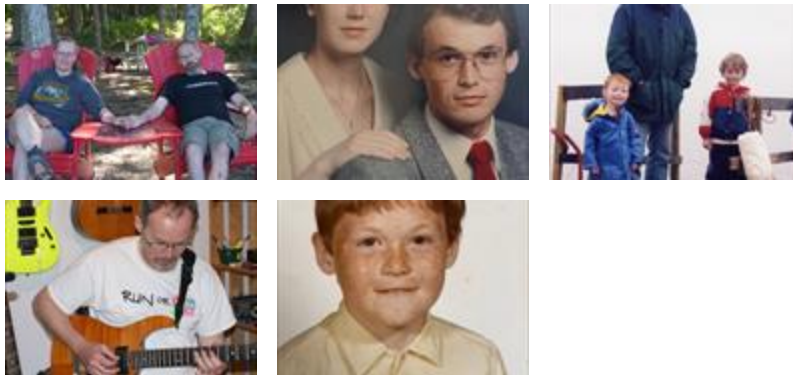
LC

“ Sorry to hear this news. I have happy memories of going to a leadership camp in Wisconsin with Steve and a crew from the youth leadership council in 1988. Steve played the guitar around the camp fire for all of us every night. Condolences to Lara and family.

Laura Cunningham - March 29, 2023 at 05:37 PM

TE

“ 9 files added to the album *In Memory*



test - March 29, 2023 at 02:00 PM

CQ

Beautiful photos Lara of the love you had with Steven. Keeping you all in our prayers as you mourn the loss and move gently forward. Much Love, Corinne & Chester xxoo

Corinne Quinlan-Leydon - April 04, 2023 at 11:54 AM

KC

“ Dear Lara, Evan and Seamus: My deepest sympathies to you for your loss.

I reconnected with Steve last year for a few months of guitar lessons after having not seen him in many years. I am so glad that I did. He taught me guitar on and off for about a decade, starting in the early 2000s.

Steve had a profound impact on me as a musician and as a person. He inspired me to keep playing, no matter what. He would never let me or anyone take the easy way -- wouldn't dream of it -- and that was some of the best advice that anyone has ever given me. Yet, if you showed him that you cared about something deeply, as he did, he would take the hard way right along with you. He'd give you countless hours of his time, attention, and wisdom.

When I'd arrive for my lesson, he would always greet me warmly and call me "the Kenster." On many occasions he would not only walk me to the door after the lesson, but he would often follow me to the car, still talking! I still have the "round tuit" certificate that he gave me many years ago, the little joke he made about procrastination. I will miss him, but I'm so glad that I knew him.

Ken Cashin

Ken Cashin - March 29, 2023 at 01:52 PM

EM

“ Dear Lara, Evan and Seamus: We were so saddened to hear of Steve's passing. The world has lost a wonderful soul. He was such a talented, and giving person. He gave so much of himself so that his students could be the best musicians they could be. We have fond memories of the house concerts he so kindly invited us to. We will keep you in our hearts and prayers .
With broken hearts, Eileen, Peter, Janique and Shaylene Melong.

Eileen Melong - March 28, 2023 at 06:25 PM

DD

*Dear Lara, Evan and Seamus
The Dempster family in Ireland are saddened to hear of the passing of Steve. We will keep you all in our prayers and thoughts at this very sad time - take care Damian and Martina Dempster*

Damian Dempster - March 29, 2023 at 03:55 PM

FS

“ Lara, I am deeply saddened for you and your family on the loss of a wonderful husband, father, and friend. You will be in my thoughts in the days and weeks ahead. Fran Selig

Fran Selig - March 28, 2023 at 05:55 PM

ZF

“ 1 file added to the album *In Memory*



Zachary Fraser - March 28, 2023 at 05:17 PM

ZF

Stephen was so kind and patient teaching guitar to this senior.

Zachary Fraser - March 28, 2023 at 05:20 PM

SM

“ *It has been almost a week, and I am at a loss for words and still in shock. Stephen was loved here, at the Lessons Centre. We only met recently, a few years ago when I hired him to teach. We developed a great rapport and I thoroughly enjoyed our talks and sharing a cup of tea/coffee together, during breaks or at the beginning of his day. He had such a thirst for knowledge and such a curiosity for everyone he met. I can't even begin to express how many stories we shared, or ideas we pondered together. never got that guitar lesson, Steve; I imagine I will let Evan teach me a few things in your stead.*

Steve, you will be greatly missed. We are mourning here; your students are mourning. It is bitter sweet now, hearing special anecdotes and stories from your former colleagues and friends. I only hope that you are sipping a strong guinness and giving us that huge smile. xxxxxxxx

Rest in Peace Dear friend.

Stephanie McKeown - March 28, 2023 at 01:01 PM

RO

“ *Much love to
You all !! I had many wonderful talks with Steve through the years
and the love he had for his wonderful wife and boys will always
remain.*

Robert - March 28, 2023 at 11:17 AM

CG

“ I was saddened to know that such a wonderful person is no longer with us. Having worked with Stephen at the Canadian Conservatory of Music was a great joy. We had so many wonderful times of laughter and sharing the love of music together. Students adored him! He was such a gentle and kind instructor who always brought out the best in his students. You will be greatly missed by all! My condolences to Lara and the rest of the family.

Much love,
Cindy Grantham

Cindy Grantham - March 28, 2023 at 10:44 AM

SA

I am saddened of the news of Stephen passing. I only knew him from his you-tube channel. He always took the time to answer me on his channel. I could tell he was a good man, a kind man. I will miss him. My Prayers are with him, and his family
Samuel (MrMuleA)

samuel - March 28, 2023 at 06:27 PM

SC

Lara, Evan and Shamus; Stephen will be remembered for all the wonderful qualities he portrayed and the talent he possessed. Gone too soon but long cherished for his positive impact on those whose lives he touched. Thinking of you and wishing you peace in his love and your memories together.
Susan, Rick and Kenny

Susan Crooks - March 29, 2023 at 10:00 AM

PM

Lara, I'm so sorry to read of Stephen's death. I wish I had met him because the obituary and the tributes of others describe a very special person. My sincere sympathies to you and your sons. May all the happy memories provide some comfort as you grieve.

Paddy Muir

Paddy Muir - March 30, 2023 at 05:04 AM