



Daniel Martin Smith

August 22, 1955 - December 24, 2019

On December 24th at the age of 64, we lost a husband, father, grandfather, brother, friend, business man, champion backgammon player, bishop busting chess player and epic storyteller.

Dan spent the majority of his childhood living in Ann Arbor, MI. An alumnus of the University of Michigan, an avid Michigan Football fan and the oldest of 6 rambunctious boys (Rudy, Randy, Scott, Baron, Matt), Dan often acted as a care taker, supporting his mother (Joyce Francis) and father (Duane Smith). At age 15 he met his lifelong friend and sixth 'brother', Ernie (Mull).

An avid reader, Dan found books and story-telling as a way to expand his world. He often referenced lessons learned on how to survive in the wilderness, to hunt, camp, play chess and backgammon. He developed his own brand of storytelling. Funny, often irreverent, and always an advocate for the underdog, Dan found the irony and ridiculousness of life entertaining and an irresistible topic of many conversations.

A lifelong learner and problem solver, Dan had an inventor's mind. Always looking to improve and enhance, he invented a modular fixture system that ensured precise measurement of industrial parts, improving the quality and safety of machinery. He often spoke lovingly and extensively about the science of metrology. He was, without a doubt, a man ahead of his time.

A champion backgammon player, Dan played in tournaments, championship matches and 'on the side' chouettes. He was part of the southeastern Michigan Backgammon community for more than 30 years and was thankful for the people he met and the long-lasting friendships that were developed.

Father of Josh (Valerie) Smith and Sarah (Kris Thorsrud) Smith, Dan lost his first wife (Ann Murphy) and mother of his children to cancer in 2001. Dan and Ann met at the University of Michigan's Pool Hall where they fell in love and spent 20 + happy and adventurous years together. Fiercely loyal and loving, after Ann's death, Dan took on life and pressed ahead, raising two wonderful human beings. He opened his home to the friends of his kids and offered a non-judgmental space for temporary regrouping and a steer back home.

In 2009, Dan met his second wife and love (Therese Samarco), and together they lived, loved, traveled, built a home together and became grandparents in 2018 (Maya Amelia (Josh and Valerie) Smith) and in 2019 (Bjorn Daniel (Sarah and Kris) Thorsrud).

Dan had a remarkably calm demeanor, exceptions being thoughtless drivers and errant raw onions found unexpectedly in meals (he claimed they 'ruined a great day'). And, after a particularly filling and delicious meal, he coined the term 'sweatpants emergency' to describe that universal need for comfort in the face of delightful overindulgence.

When diagnosed in March 2018 with a rare and aggressive form of skin cancer (Merkel Cell Carcinoma), Dan underwent extensive treatment. He faced his mortality with hope, acceptance and grace, leading his family through the highs and lows of treatment successes and setbacks. It was only in the last 7 days of his life that Dan bravely made the decision to suspend treatment - the cancer was simply too aggressive and due to its rarity not well

enough understood to stop the progression.

Dan passed surrounded by wonderful caregivers, the love of his family and the 'smooth end' he requested.

A gathering is being planned for after the new year. The family requests you share a story/memory of Dan and that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to:

- University of Michigan, Rogel Cancer Center Patient and Family Support Services Program: <https://leadersandbest.umich.edu/find/#!/give/basket/fund/317598/tributee/Deborah20L.20Wardell/type/memory>

- MerkelCell.org:

<https://merkelcell.org/join-the-fight/donate/>

Tribute Wall



“ We hung out for a short period of time a long time ago. I remember playing in your back four on Scio Church Rd in the '62 Pontiac Catalina convertible. Next to the Rees'es place. Then you Smiths moved out to Gleaner Hall Rd off Pontiac Trail. I remember returning Dan and Randy in my 1969 VW Bug one snowy night and going into a multiple rotation spin-out on the ice just as we hit the bridge over US 23 and coming to a stop near Cornwall Pools on the other side of 23. Super scary and we couldn't see a thing the whole time! One of the luckiest days in my life. I remember blasting grasshoppers with your Marlin 22 on hot summer afternoons. You caught a Dog Fish at the Dexter Lakes Fish and Hunting Club and we took it to a nearby sport shop where you bought a 35 caliber Winchester rifle. The bass I caught stayed in my freezer till my mom through it out. I remember driving back and forth many times between Ann Arbor and Gleaner Hall with you on the back of my Suzuki 80. Riding down Pontiac Trail Rd and feeling the chill at the bottom of the hills and warming back up as we created the next hill. I remember getting a farmer's permission to hunt crows on his land only to be shot at by his ignorant neighbor who thought we were trespassing. I remember getting drunk with you on Boone's Farm wine at the Ann Arbor Arboretum.

Not sure why or when we went our separate ways. I suppose it was because you went to Huron High when it opened and I went down the street Pioneer High. Wish we could have met up one last time to reminisce. Turns out our lives had a lot of similar twists and turns. Take it easy Brother ;^)

Dave Bender - June 26, 2021 at 07:52 PM