A Celebration of the Life of

Stephen Oakey

24 March 1946 – 6 December 2024

31 December 2024, Peel Green Crematorium
Celebrant: Caroline Jones



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No tribute to Steve would be complete without mentioning the love of his life, his constant companion, never far from his side: not Susan or Julie, although he undoubtedly adored them both, but, of course, Daffy Duck. Steve was Daffy's biggest fan, although when this started is lost in the mists of time now. Since he was born in 1946, nine years after Daffy, he may have first fallen for him in childhood. Whenever the love, or perhaps obsession, started, it stayed with him for life, as you can see from the hat on top of his coffin today, a hat he maintained brought him a lot of smiles from the young ladies of Eccles over the last few years.

Steve's house is filled with Daffy in various guises, on mugs, photos, T-shirts and much more, making him very easy to buy presents for. He even met his hero once at a theme park in Germany, and had the photo of the historic occasion blown up and hung in pride of place in his hall.

He took his Jester Daffy around the world, and once convinced the cruise ship staff to throw him a birthday party, complete with candle lit cake and singing. The crew must have felt, like his friends and family, that it was easier to just go along with it, but perhaps also like many of his friends, secretly loved encouraging him in his seeming madness, but as Daffy himself put it: "I'm not crazy, I just don't give a darn!"

Steve lived his life unapologetically and was 100% himself at all times regardless of what anyone else thought, but, perhaps because of this, was highly regarded and respected by almost everyone he met. And there was far more to him than Daffy Duck.

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He was born in London, later moving to Huntingdon, and proved himself to be bright early on, something picked up on by his employers when he worked at RAF Brampton. They helped him take his maths A-level early, which led on to him doing a Computer Science degree at what was then Constantine College of Advanced Technology (now Teesside University).

Steve's course involved various placements, and he was just back from six months in Norway, sitting in a classroom wearing one of his well-known jumpers, when a young woman walked in and told him he was in the wrong room. Always right, Steve insisted it was her who was mistaken, which must have charmed Susan, because they began dating and were married in 1970, just after he graduated.

Steve got a job as a computer manager for Merthyr Tydfil council, so the couple moved to Wales, welcoming their daughter Julie in 1973. As well as working for the council, Steve did a bit of teaching at the local 6th form college, and realised he loved it, so got a lecturing job back at Teesside, by then a polytechnic. While working there, he published two books: one of which, FORTH for Micros taught the programming language FORTH. He was less successful in teaching Julie to programme around this time, pronouncing her unteachable after one lesson.

He then took a role lecturing in Computer Science at MMU, then Manchester Polytechnic, in 1986. Steve lived in halls in Whalley Range until Susan and Julie joined him in 1987 and the family moved to the Eccles house Steve lived in until his death. He progressed to Head of Department at MMU before taking early retirement, an area in which he didn't emulate Daffy Duck, who once proclaimed, "Help me, please. I'm too moist and tender to retire."

Steve had a strong sense of fairness, and a keen interest in the law, so, when he saw that Salford were looking for new magistrates, he signed up, and spent several years on the bench, work he found fascinating and was very good at.

Outside of work, Steve was a proud father and grandfather to Julie, and her children Sam and Maddie, once they had all passed the baby stage anyway. He couldn't cope with nappies but very much enjoyed their company once they could hold a conversation. He particularly enjoyed Maddie's non-stop chatter whenever she stayed with them, and was an enthusiastic audience for the song and dance shows she would put on in the living room.

Steve would do anything for his family, sacrificing a lot so that Julie and later Sam and Maddie could have the best education. Once, when Julie was boarding a plane just as David Bowie tickets were released, he spent hours getting them for her, because he was that kind of person, who would always put himself out for those he loved. He threw a surprise 60th for Susan, and more recently sponsored a penguin for her at Chester Zoo, although they weren't able to work out which one of the many was actually hers when they visited, and the penguin in question failed to oblige by waving. He supported his family in all their endeavours, from Susan's Girl Guiding to Julie's hockey matches—which he never missed. He could be strict as a father at times, but he always had Julie's back and she knew it.

Always curious and interested, Steve had a lot of hobbies over the years: travel, bonsai trees, and many more, but cricket was one of his abiding loves. As a child, he once got chatting to a group of men in a café and went with them to play cricket in a garden nearby. It was only once he got there that he realised they were the Pakistani cricket team!

He grew up near the Oval and was often found there cheering Surrey on. Later, he took up cricket umpiring, and even trained up new umpires. This progressed to scoring, which he did until ill health forced him to give up. He was very excited when Sam started playing cricket, buying him a bat, which Sam sat cuddling for the rest of the day.

He loved to travel and had visited most parts of the globe over the years, eating ant pudding in Laos, and attending conferences in Canada, often accompanied by his soft toy companions, Snoopy and Henrietta, and later, of course, by Daffy Duck. He loved music, both listening to a wide range of genres and playing the organ himself. He took

pleasure from the little moments in life, like Daffy Duck sneaking into Sam's wedding photos or a perfectly pruned bonsai maple. He celebrated things: like Speak Like a Pirate day, which he never missed, especially once Julie bought him a hat and cutlass for the annual occasion.

Steve fully embraced who he was and who and what he loved, and lived that every day of his life, and if he could entertain those around him through that, so much the better. He lived his life his way, and was loved by those who knew him because of that. That said, he didn't suffer fools gladly, another thing he shared with Daffy Duck, who once announced: "Obviously I'm dealing with inferior mentalities," a sentiment Steve shared at times.