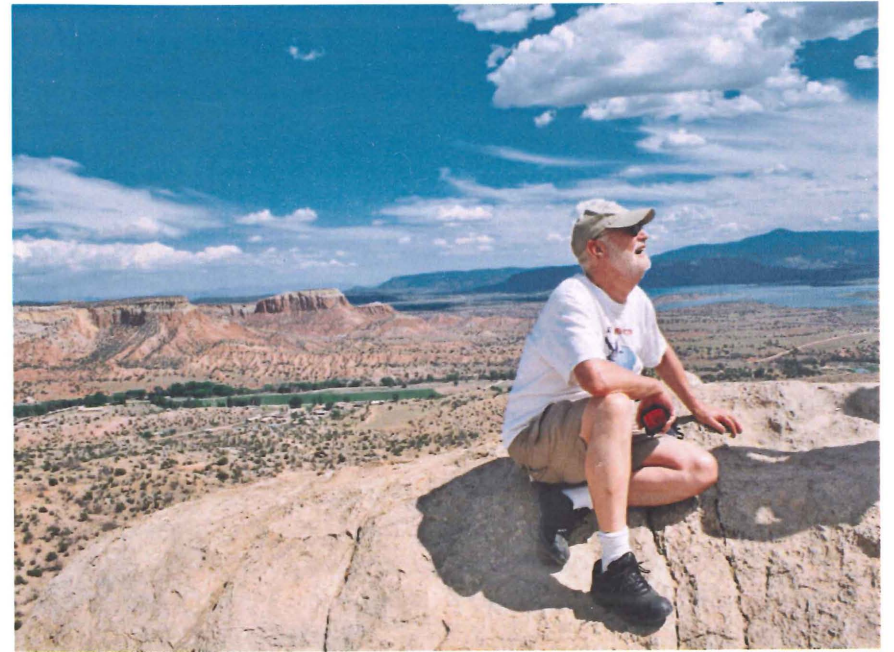


In Memoriam



Gary Michael DeCramer
September 13, 1944 – March 7, 2012

Gary Michael DeCramer
Memorial Service • March 20, 2012 • 4:00 p.m.
Ted Mann Concert Hall, University of Minnesota
**Please stand in body or in spirit.*

Drum Circle Nawayee Center School Drum Group
Welcome Greg Lindsay
Prelude *Vocalise* — Sergei Rachmaninoff
 Taichi Chen, violin; Ruth Palmer, piano
Call to Worship Rev. Rob Eller-Isaacs
Chalice Lighting Katie DeCramer and Louise DeCramer
*Opening Hymn *Blue Boat Home* — words and music by Peter Mayer
 Peter Mayer, guitar

*Though below me, I feel no motion
Standing on these mountains and plains
Far away from the rolling ocean
Still my dry land heart can say
I've been sailing all my life now
Never harbor or port have I known
The wide universe is the ocean I travel
And the earth is my blue boat home*

*Sun, my sail and moon, my rudder
As I ply the starry sea
Leaning over the edge in wonder
Casting question into the deep
Drifting here with my ship's companions
All we kindred pilgrim souls
Making our way by the lights of the heavens
In our beautiful blue boat home*

*I give thanks to the waves upholding me
Hail the great winds urging me on
Greet the infinite sea before me
Sing the sky my sailor's song
I was born upon the fathoms
Never harbor or port have I known
The wide universe is the ocean I travel
And the earth is my blue boat home*

Words on Grief

Rev. Janne Eller-Isaacs

Reading *Soneto de la Noche* (Sonnet of the Night) — Pablo Neruda
Interlude *Lullabye (Goodbye, My Angel)*
 words and music by Billy Joel/arr. Kirby Shaw
 Unity Singers

Silence
Reading Psalm 23
Minister's Prayer
Interlude Peter Ostroushko
Remembrance Lars Anderson
Interlude
Remembrance John Kaul
*Hymn of Affirmation *This Is My Song*

*This is my song, O God of all the nations,
a song of peace for lands a-far and mine.
This is my home, the country where my heart is;
here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;
but other hearts in other lands are beating
with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.*

*My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,
and sunlight beams on clover leaf and pine;
but other lands have sunlight too, and clover,
and skies are everywhere as blue as mine.
O hear my song, thou God of all the nations,
a song of peace for their land and for mine.*

*Responsive Reading *They Are with Us Still* — Kathleen McTigue
In the struggles we choose for ourselves,
in the ways we move forward in our lives
and bring our world forward with us,

*It is right to remember the names of those
who gave us strength in this choice of living.
It is right to name the power of hard lives well-lived.*

We share a history with those lives.
We belong to the same motion.

(continued)

*They too were strengthened by what had gone before.
They too were drawn on by the vision of what might come to be.*

Those who lived before us,
who struggled for justice and suffered injustice before us,
have not melted into the dust, and have not disappeared.

They are with us still. The lives they lived hold us steady.

Their words remind us and call us back to ourselves.
Their courage and love evoke our own.
We, the living, carry them with us:
we are their voices, their hands and their hearts.

We take them with us, and with them choose the deeper path of living.

Interlude

Remembrance Estelle's Reflections; Margaret Anderson Kelliher

Interlude *Holy Now* — words and music by Peter Mayer

Reflections on a Life Well-Lived

Interlude *There Will Be Rest* — Frank Ticheli

Charge

*Closing Hymn *For All the Saints*

*For all the saints who from their labors rest,
who thee by faith before the world confessed,
thy name most holy be forever blest. Allelu-Alleluia!*

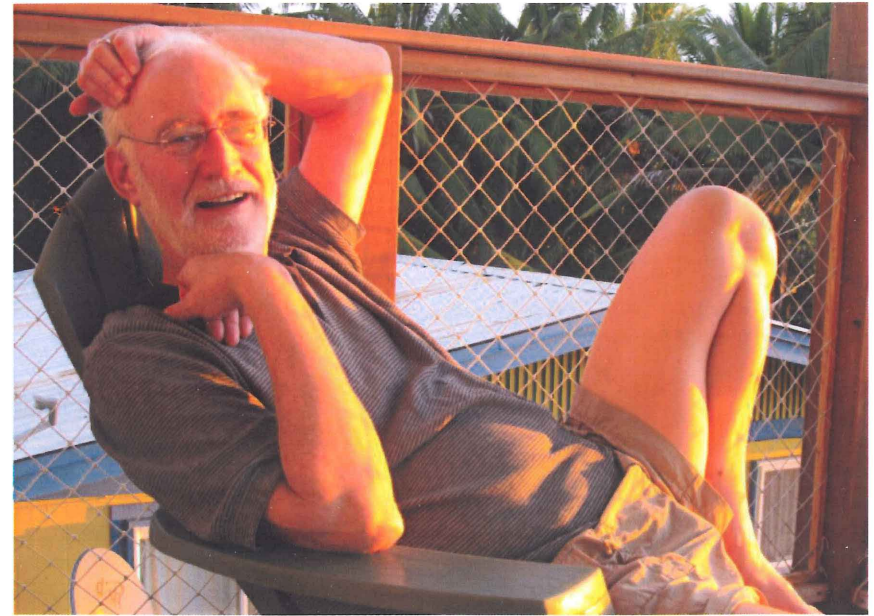
*Thou wast their rock, their shelter and their might;
their strength and solace in the well-fought fight;
thou, in the darkness deep their one true light. Allelu-Alleluia!*

*O blest communion of the saints divine!
We live in struggle, they in glory shine;
yet all are one in thee, for all are thine. Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*And when the strife is fierce, the conflict long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
and hearts are brave again, and arms are strong. Allelu-Alleluia!*

*Benediction

Postlude *Praeludium (from Praeludium and Allegro)* — Fritz Kreisler



Service Participants

The drum group is students from the Nawayee Center School in Minneapolis.

Greg Lindsay is the Executive Associate Dean of the Humphrey School.

Ruth Palmer is the Director of Music Ministry at Unity Church-Unitarian.

Taichi Chen, violinist, is a member of Minnesota Orchestra.

Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs are Co-ministers at Unity Church-Unitarian.

Peter Mayer is a Minnesota singer/songwriter who writes songs about the human journey.

Unity Singers is an auditioned ensemble from Unity Church-Unitarian. Estelle is a beloved singer with the group.

Peter Ostroushko is a musician and composer well-known for his musical contributions to *A Prairie Home Companion*.

Lars Anderson is Gary and Estelle's beloved nephew, oldest son of Gary's sister Sherry and brother-in-law Harry Anderson.

John Kaul and Margaret Anderson Kelliher and their families are dear, long-time friends of the entire Brouwer DeCramer family.

The family invites you to stay for a reception in the lobby following the service.

Gary Michael DeCramer was born full of joy in Marshall, Minnesota, on September 13, 1944, to Bertha and Mike DeCramer. Gary grew up on the family farm near Ghent with his parents and his two younger sisters Pat and Sherry. As a boy, Gary worked hard on the farm, learning to drive a tractor when he was 5 or 6 years old. His calling as a teacher may have begun to take root in third grade when his 4-H calf Frisky was bitten by a rabid skunk and had to be put down. His school teacher, a nun, suggested that he go from classroom to classroom at St. Eloi's elementary and tell the story of Frisky to the other kids, including the 7th and 8th graders, so they would all know about the danger of rabid skunks. "To these fifteen giant upper class mates, I told my story. They did not laugh at me. They smiled, nodded. And I left trembling."

The oldest of 44 cousins in a large Flemish-Dutch Catholic family, Gary was destined from birth for the priesthood. As a young teenager, he went to Crosier Seminary in Onamia, Minnesota, where he studied for five years before deciding that the life of a priest, specifically celibacy, was not for him. He then enrolled in pre-med studies at St. Thomas College in St. Paul, but "I was trying to live out an ideal that I was convinced could legitimize my decision to no longer study for the priesthood." He graduated instead with a degree in English. He went on to earn a Master's in English at the University of Oklahoma in Norman where he found he loved teaching.

Gary was married to Patricia O'Brien in May 1967 in Norman, Oklahoma, and divorced several years later. Their daughter Leila Mary was born October 16, 1968. The family lived in Canada for a short time before moving back to Oklahoma, where Gary continued his graduate studies. It was while studying anthropology at OU that Gary lived for a time with the Chalepah family, members of the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma. The family adopted him as a son and brother and this connection continued throughout Gary's life. Also while in Oklahoma, Gary went to work for Schwan's and was very proud of his outstanding record of selling frozen foods door to door.

Eventually the family returned to Minnesota, where Gary and his dad Mike jointly operated the family farm and water delivery business. It was during this time that Gary became connected to the southwestern Minnesota literary circle that included Bill Holm, Fred Manfred and a number of other poets and writers, and co-founded the literary gathering "Cornstock." Gary ran for office for the first time in 1981, when State Senator Jim Nichols resigned in the wake of a personal tragedy. Gary was defeated that year, but the next year, after redistricting, he ran again and won the Minnesota Senate seat for District 27.

Gary first met Estelle Brouwer in December 1982, shortly after winning election to the senate. In that first meeting, they learned of their shared southwestern Minnesota roots, even discovering that their parents knew each other and Estelle's dad Louis, a building contractor, had at one time remodeled the DeCramer farmhouse kitchen. Gary and Estelle were married May 28, 1988, in Estelle's hometown of Tyler, Minnesota. They have two lovely daughters together, Catherine Estelle (Katie), born March 29, 1990, and Louise Claire, born May 10, 1994.

Gary's accomplishments in the Senate were many and varied – but he was proudest of his work supporting education, particularly the Minnesota Indian Education Act, the Minnesota school breakfast bill, and legislation authorizing the formation of charter schools. In 1991, Gary was invited to serve as interim president of Southwest State University (SSU) in Marshall, Minnesota, a position he held until the opening of the 1992 legislative session. He retired from the Senate at the end of 1992, but the SSU role had reignited his passion for teaching and he decided to go back to school once again. He enrolled in the Education Leadership program at the University of St. Thomas and went to work for the State and Local Policy Program at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. He received his EdD degree in 1997 and then, at Senator Paul Wellstone's urging, took the position of State Director of USDA Rural Development, which he held until early 2001. The USDA role gave him the opportunity to return to his rural roots and work to support the rural and tribal communities he cared so deeply about.

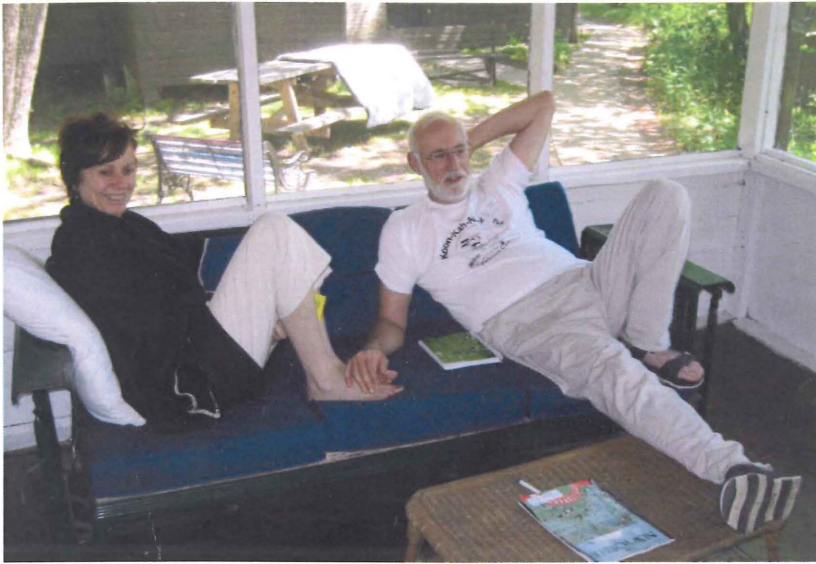
In 2002, Gary's friend and former Senate colleague John Brandl, then dean of the Humphrey Institute, asked him to consider returning to the Humphrey as director of the MPA (mid-career Master's degree) program. He did so, and served in that role, and as senior lecturer at the School, until his death. He loved his work at the Humphrey School, his colleagues, and his students. He served as a teacher, mentor and advisor to countless souls, many of whom are now giving back through public or non-profit service, here in Minnesota and around the world.

Gary loved his family and many friends, cooking with Estelle, gardening, reading, being goofy, talking politics, Unity Church, Camp Unistar (especially happy hour), and morning walks with his chocolate Lab Lucy.

Gary's beloved dad Mike died in November 1986, the morning after Gary was reelected to the Senate for the first time. Gary was so proud of his dad, his affable, easy-going manner, and the way he had of getting to know pretty much everybody he met. Gary's mother-in-law Esther Brouwer, whom he also loved dearly, passed away in June 2004.

Gary died suddenly March 7, 2012, while on a college visit to the University of Minnesota, Morris, with daughter Louise. He had been looking forward to this trip for some time, mainly because he was excited to introduce Louise to this little prairie school. He had other plans for the visit too, including meeting with his friends at the Center for Small Towns and doing a little recruiting for the Humphrey School. He was doing what he did best – making connections, making friends, being totally and utterly Gary – right up until the moment he died. He was 67 years old and had already lived a full, beautiful and bounteous life. His core commitment in life, in his own words, was "to know, love and serve others."

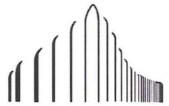
Gary is dearly missed by his loving wife Estelle, daughters Katie and Louise DeCramer and Leila Vance, mother Bertha, sisters Pat Lenz and Sherry Anderson, grandchildren Tessa, Chris, Nick, Elisa, Natalie and AnnMarie Vance, his Oklahoma family the Chalepahs, and countless beloved friends, relatives, students and former students, colleagues and former colleagues.



Advice

Someone dancing inside us
has learned only a few steps:
the "Do-Your-Work" in 4/4 time,
the "What-Do-You-Expect" Waltz.
He hasn't noticed yet the woman
standing away from the lamp.
the one with black eyes
who knows the rumba.
and strange steps in jumpy rhythms
from the mountains of Bulgaria.
If they dance together,
something unexpected will happen;
if they don't, the next world
will be a lot like this one.

— Bill Holm



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