

Paul Keith Bitter

December 22, 1946 - October 13, 2022

On October 13, 2022, surrounded by the family he dearly loved, Paul Keith Bitter's joy was complete as he unexpectedly left his earthly home for the eternal. Services for Paul, 75, of Whitehouse will be held on Thursday, October 20, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. at Stewart Family Funeral Home with Pastor Luke Bilberry and Rev. Dr. Stuart Baskin officiating. Burial will follow at Whitehouse Cemetery under the direction of Stewart Family Funeral Home.

Paul was a devoted husband, proud father, doting grandpa, and genuine friend. To know Paul means that you heard stories of his pursuit of adventure; from backpacking the mountains of New Mexico on his horse, Scooter, with his buddies, surfing off the coast of San Diego, sailing with the yacht club on Lake Tyler, fly fishing the beautiful rivers of North Carolina, to cycling as often as he could get on his bike (even at 75). He could often be seen on Kickapoo Creek in a kayak with friends Hal and Steve and his sidekick and dog, Kipp. Paul embraced life fully.

Paul and his twin brother, John, were born on December 22, 1946, in Springfield, Illinois to Melvin Bitter and Gertrude Jungen Bitter. One of two sets of twins and six children, Paul loved his family. Paul graduated from Worcester State University, serving as president of his senior class. After joining the Peace Corps and hitchhiking from where he served in Mexico to Austin, Paul earned his Master of Divinity at Austin Presbyterian Theological

Seminary, where he met some of his lifelong friends.

He met and married his beautiful wife, Martha Rose McAfee, in 1975 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma as he interned at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church. Together, Paul and Martha served churches in Oklahoma City and Mangum, Oklahoma before moving to Austin, Texas for Paul to complete his chaplaincy program. They then made Tyler home for Paul to become a chaplain at University of Texas Health Science Center. Paul's care, compassion, and desire to see people healthy and whole spiritually, physically, and mentally came from his great faith in God and his own experience with congestive heart failure and polio as a small child. He practiced as a licensed professional counselor at his private practice in Tyler for the last 35 years while also serving the Presbyterian Church through the Grace Presbytery and retired as a Presbyterian Minister in 2013.

As evidenced by the countless daily journals of life he leaves behind, Paul loved God and loved his family. Filled with scripture and notes from the mundane, his journals are a window to what he valued most. One of the greatest joys of Paul's life was his children and grandchildren. He always made sure they knew how proud he was of them. He usually had a camera in his hand to capture their accomplishments and eagerly shared the pictures with anyone he spent time with.

As his children, we will miss receiving texts with his infamous selfies while cycling the winding roads of East Texas, the sound of his amazing laugh, the touch of his strong hugs, listening to his never-ending cheesy jokes, and random phone calls just to let us know how much he loved us. We hope to embrace life and leave legacies behind that are as rich as Dad's.

Paul was preceded in death by his parents, Melvin and Gertrude, and sisters Regina and Christine. Paul leaves behind his loving wife of 46 years, Martha

(McAfee), son Jarrod (Marlo Thompson), daughters Rachel and Kathryn (Luke Bilberry) as well as his grandchildren, Emily Claire and Allison Paige Bitter and Madelyn Kate, Noah Luke and Wyatt Paul Bilberry and their sibling he was eager to meet due in January, his brothers John (Mary Johnson), and Mark, and sister Pam (Cliff Obertuck), along with many in laws, nieces, and nephews.

Pallbearers will be Luke Bilberry, Marlo Bitter, Emily Bitter, Allison Bitter, Madelyn Bilberry, Noah Bilberry and Wyatt Bilberry. Honorary pallbearers are John Bitter, Mark Bitter, Steve Evans, Hal James, and David Norcom.

Visitation is scheduled from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 19, 2022 at Stewart Family Funeral Home, 7525 Old Jacksonville Highway in Tyler.

In lieu of flowers, do something that Paul loved to do—go on an adventure, spoil someone you love, and spread kindness.

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **19**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Service

OCT **20**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Interment

OCT **20** (CT)

Whitehouse Cemetery
401 Memory Lane
Whitehouse, TX 75791

Tribute Wall



“ Stewart Family Funeral Home created a Webcast in memory of Paul Keith Bitter



Stewart Family Funeral Home - October 20, 2022 at 09:15 AM



“ Stewart Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Paul Keith Bitter



Stewart Family Funeral Home - October 19, 2022 at 12:26 PM

TP

“ I knew Paul and his family, who lived next to me in North Brookfield, MA. His dad, Pastor Bitter, Married me in 1974. God's Blessing to all who knew him and may Jesus fill the hearts of his family.

Theresa Plante - July 05, 2023 at 05:20 PM

RP

“ Our hearts and prayers go out to Paul’s family. We worked with Paul at UTHCT some 40 yrs ago. He was such a light to employees. I remember Paul making rounds very late on night shifts to comfort patients and nurses. He was always smiling and joyful. We hold firm in our faith and know we will all meet again on Gods beautiful shores. Gods blessings. Paul will be miss by all who loved him.
Richard and Shay Persinger
Whitehouse, Texas

Richard and Shay Persinger - December 18, 2022 at 12:16 PM

RG

“ My name is Randy Gros. I was one of Paul's buddies on horseback in New Mexico. I'm sorry to hear of Paul's passing. He was definitely a pleasure to be around. Along with our other trail riding buddy, Ralph Slider, we covered a large section of Lincoln National Forest. Ralph always gave Paul the blues about Scooter, stating he was riding a giraffe, because of Scooters long gangly legs. Paul would chuckle louder about it than any of us! We told him we let him ride with us for the free counseling! Paul got a big kick out of that! You will be missed by many. Definitely an asset to your fellow man! Rest easy.

Randy Gros - October 31, 2022 at 05:28 PM

CB

“ Dear Bitter Family,
I am so sorry to read of Mr. Paul's passing. I cut his hair for a long time and he was so sweet, kind and full of joy! I always looked forward to hearing about his family and his horse. I will be praying for your family.
Sincerely, Carla Bright

Carla Bright - October 26, 2022 at 05:31 PM

CS

“ Dear Martha and family,

You and I have never met but my husband, Paul Strom, and your Paul went to seminary together. After Paul and I married in December of 1972 and I moved to Austin from Boulder to live there I remember meeting your Paul. I remember him to be warm and quick with a smile, something nice to say each time we met. He and Paul enjoyed sports together. They both played on the seminary basketball team. We had such fun at all the games. The guys were quite competitive and rowdy. And, like your Paul, my husband was an active outdoorsman. Hiking and climbing in the Colorado Rockies, especially in Rocky Mountain National Park, skiing and cycling.

Paul and I served churches in Kentucky and Colorado for fifteen years before Paul decided that church ministry was not his calling. We moved with our three children from Estes Park, where our last church was, and down to Denver where he completed his Ph.D. at Iliff Seminary and the University of Denver. He taught at DU and then at CU, Boulder for over 25 years. His area of teaching was non-violent social action.

Sadly, I lost my Paul on March fifth of this year. We were to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary this December. So, Martha, I understand the significance of the horrible loss you and your family are feeling. I felt I had to write to you to tell you that you are not alone in your grief and to offer my love and prayers for your family. My children and grandchildren have been my joy and strength during this time as I'm sure yours are as well. Cling to them and to your faith.

I send along deep compassion and lovingkindness during this time of grief for you. Please don't hesitate to reach out if I can be of any comfort to you.

Carolee Strom

766 S Martin St Apt C215

Longmont, CO 80501

303-241-9173

Carolee Strom - October 23, 2022 at 04:41 PM

TD

“ *It saddens me to hear about Paul's passing. I got to know Paul during Jarrod's baseball years. He was a good man that was quick to smile, friendly to all and loved his family. He is enjoying his heavenly reward for a life well lived.*

Tony Dorsey - October 21, 2022 at 01:40 PM

MP

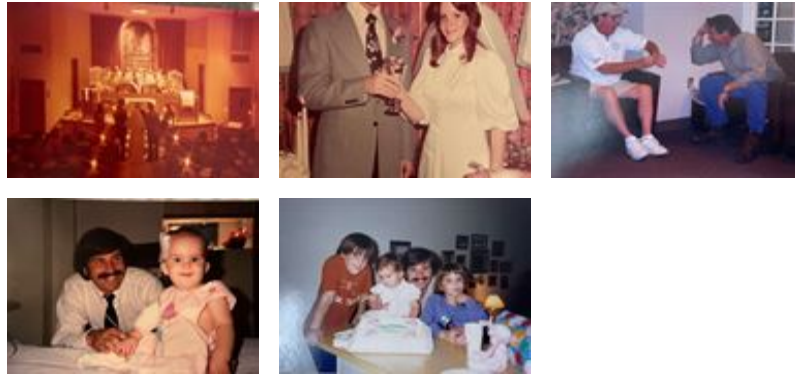
“ *I was a neighbor on Kelli. I would often see Paul walking with his beautiful spaniel as I would be out in my yard. He would sometimes stop and we would have a quick conversation. Sometimes, he would be talking on his phone while walking, but he would always wave. I would also see him riding his bike quite often. Rest in peace neighbor.*

Melanie Pickrell - October 20, 2022 at 06:18 PM



STEWART
FAMILY FUNERAL HOME

“ *115 files added to the album Life Tributes*



Stewart Family Funeral Home - October 19, 2022 at 12:24 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.*



October 19, 2022 at 11:24 AM



“ *I did not know Paul but work at Christus with Martha. I want to tell you that's one of the most beautiful tributes I have read. His was obviously a life well lived. I'm so sorry for his family's loss.*

Mary McElroy - October 19, 2022 at 11:19 AM



“ *Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.*



October 19, 2022 at 07:59 AM



“ *Bill and Suzanne Ball purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.*



Bill and Suzanne Ball - October 18, 2022 at 04:48 PM

WB

“ I was blessed to meet Paul at the seminary we attended. I knew at the beginning of our friendship I was in the presence of a very unusual person. He was always cheerful and gracious when engaged in any activity. He had a way of teaching people how to live by his example and I think he made everyone he was in contact with at the seminary a better student and person. His smile and love for all that life has to offer was unavoidable and contagious. He was so proud of his family and shared many stories he knew were important. He never held back his love and concern for others and was quick to help when care was needed. He focused on the good in others. Simply put, he's one of those people you get to know who you never want to let go of. I'm glad I don't have to. See you on the other side brother. We'll all miss you until then. Love to you and your beautiful family, Stormy

William Ball - October 18, 2022 at 04:34 PM

YF

“ Your Tyler ISD Family purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.



Your Tyler ISD Family - October 18, 2022 at 12:45 PM



“ Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.



October 18, 2022 at 12:06 PM

MD

“ I had the pleasure of working down the hall from Paul's office for about 6 years. He was without a doubt one of the most wonderful people I had ever met. I always looked forward to hearing his words of wisdom, listening to his funny jokes, or petting his beloved dog Kipp. His love of his family, friends, life in general was an inspiration to all of us in the office building. I was deeply saddened to hear of his passing. I know that he will be missed by so many, including myself. It was an honor to have known such a wonderful man.

Micah Free Denney - October 18, 2022 at 10:23 AM



“ Crystal Cross Bouquet was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.



October 18, 2022 at 09:15 AM

ST

“ I knew Paul from my work with the Committee on Ministry and found in him a truly caring friend. He supported me through personal and professional challenges, and his positive attitude and love for life were infectious. What a treasure he was. My prayers are with the family that loved him most.

Sheryl Taylor - October 17, 2022 at 10:43 PM

FB

“ From Mark Bitter purchased the Rainbow Of Remembrance Spray for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.



From Mark Bitter - October 17, 2022 at 10:38 PM



“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.



October 17, 2022 at 09:13 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.



October 17, 2022 at 11:13 AM



“ Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.



October 16, 2022 at 06:40 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.*



October 16, 2022 at 06:35 PM



“ *I heard of Paul's passing from a mutual friend, Hal James. Hal is in my watercolor class and Hal knew that Paul's horse died back in Sept. and wanted to paint a painting for Paul with his horse, Scout. I hope to help Hal finish the painting for Paul's family. I met Paul when I was making rounds at UTHSC back in the 1980's. Served on various committees with Paul as he took leadership roles and was formative in developing the first Committee for the UTHSC for humans subjects research which I was asked to serve on by Paul. Later, when I became chair he served on my committee. From that time on we would call or email and sometimes meet for lunch. After he left the UTHSC I did not see him often but still have great memories of seeing him when our sons played baseball on leagues at Goldenroad Baseball Complex. He was so proud of his son and his baseball prowess. My life has been enriched by Paul's friendship and his compassion over the past 40 years.*

Jim Koukl - October 16, 2022 at 05:26 PM



“ *Hal James purchased the Sweet Tranquility Basket for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.*



Hal James - October 16, 2022 at 04:53 PM

HJ

“ To Martha, Jarrod, Rachael, Kathryn, loved ones and friends, there are so many treasured memories of my dearly loved friend Paul Bitter. I am sure his compassionate spirit is with us in our hearts as we grieve his passing.

I got to know Paul back in the mid 80s when he served as Chaplain at the University of Texas Health Center. He was a delightful colleague also capable of carrying out research. He was there voluntarily for my son Daniel and myself and my wife Pranee as she was dying of cancer and as she passed away. He shared our grief and walked with us the whole distance.

Paul and I would always be in touch after that time, becoming forever friends. We talked about everything under the sun, sharing our most intimate secrets, got out on the water in our kayaks and in hip boots on lakes and rivers, traded a variety of first class pocket knives, went out with our firearms for target practice, and traveled up to Southern Appalachia to visit relatives and interesting places. It was always a special time when we got together, Paul always with his unique sense of humor.

At this final farewell with a thousand treasured memories, warrior mountain man Paul is riding the trails into mountains and crossing streams in a new world. Allow me to say I Love You Amigo, Vaya Con Dios. Your Forever Friend, Hal James

Hal James - October 16, 2022 at 04:31 PM

MB

“ Paul, was not only just a brother to me; but also my best friend in life. The hours we spent over the phone, throughout the years, will remain with me for the rest of my life. We encouraged each other in the faith, which caused to bring us even closer together. Christ was our hiding place, and a shelter from the storms of life that would often come our way. To our growing up years in San Diego, Ca., and eventually a three thousand mile move to the small town of North Brookfield, Ma., my adventure with Paul took us through the years of High School and College. Even though we attended different schools of learning, they were both in the city of Worcester, Ma. Paul always welcomed me into his circle of friends, and continued to make me a part of his life. Throughout the years that followed, Paul never changed, and because of this, I am what I am today. Molded on the potter's wheel of life, by the gentle hands of my brother, Paul.
Mark

Mark Bitter - October 16, 2022 at 10:27 AM

JW

“ Martha, Paul saved my life time and time again and I will forever be grateful. As a pastor I sent literally hundreds of people to him for help. He would always tell me, “ Well Joe I will do my best to help them.” I pray the presence and grace of our Lord will assuage your sorrow and slowly replace it with wonderful memories of your life together. I loved Paul so much that I suppose now I will have to root for the Boston Red Sox.
Dr. Joe Warren

Joe Warren - October 16, 2022 at 10:20 AM



“ *Crystal Cross Bouquet was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.*



October 15, 2022 at 02:59 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.*



October 15, 2022 at 11:56 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Paul Keith Bitter.*



October 15, 2022 at 09:44 AM

RR

“ We were so sorry to hear of Paul’s death. We met him when we moved to Mixon and his horse stayed at the adjoining property. We later “co-owned” Scooter with Paul until Scooter’s passing on September 6 at the age of 34 years old.



Ricky & Donna Roach - October 13, 2022 at 10:42 PM