

Update on Alan and Vickie Stewart Eastman

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5698 So. Park Place East

Holladay, UT 84121

Vickie: vickieeastman@gmail.com, 801-440-3874

Alan: aeastmanslc@gmail.com 801-440-3875

Over the years, we have all gone our different directions, and done a variety of different things. Our lives now seem to be converging again: the last few years have found us all doing many of the very same things. Here's our part of the story:

Travel: In fall of 2019, we took a wonderful trip to Eastern Europe to see some of the places that were behind the Iron Curtain all the time we were growing up, places I never thought I would see. There was a poignant and powerful emphasis on the Holocaust in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, to the point that I felt rather angry when we visited Austria, the land of the oppressors. We loved Vienna, but couldn't shake the feeling that these people didn't deserve to be so happy and prosperous after what they had done in World War II. It was a wrenching but eye-opening journey.

Right now, we are on a trip in Northern Italy to celebrate Alan's 75th birthday. We are traveling to the Italian Lakes, the Cinque Terre, Florence, Siena, Lucca, Verona, the Dolomites, and ending in Venice, where we will be trying not to get too lost, instead of having a lovely time with all of you. Sigh... We had originally planned on a tour to France, where Alan served a mission, but it was cancelled due to too few participants. Italy was next on our list, so we switched to a sister tour from the same company. We have had our COVID booster and flu shots and hope, hope, hope we will be safe! We have now been married for more than twenty years.

We're volunteers for the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), which certifies public lands and communities as places where the dark sky is protected as a natural and cultural resource. We started out by traveling to national parks to train their staff and take the initial light readings that are required for certification. In that capacity, we visited Zion National Park, Sequoia/Kings Canyon NP, Redwoods NP, Mesa Verde NM, and Bears Ears NM, where we ran into a herd of cattle at midnight after taking light readings on Cedar Mesa! Killed three cows and totaled our car, but we were fine. We also wrote sections of various dark sky applications and raised money to have lighting inventories done. For our efforts, we were named "International Dark Sky Defenders" by the IDA. Alan is on the board of the Utah IDA chapter now and will become its president in 2022. It's our effort to protect public lands.

Osher Institute: This is a continuing education program for people 50 and older at the University of Utah. Classes last six weeks and don't have papers or tests: it is learning for the sake of learning. Alan has been very successful teaching science courses, including "Water," "Energy in America," "The Electrical Grid," "Climate Change," "Plastics," and "Air Pollution." He has always wanted to teach adults and really enjoys doing it.

Music: One morning we went out to kill some time at a used piano sale and came back with a Steinway Model M grand piano! We both love it, Alan for how it plays and me for how it fits into our living room. Alan continues as a ward organist and also plays in Mixed Nuts, an ensemble which performs at senior living homes, and a couple of big bands.

Health: Not so good here. In 2019, I had a spike in an arthritic condition that has plagued me intermittently since I went to India in 1982 (remember then?) and got a serious gastrointestinal infection. I have been able to control spikes through the years with prednisone, but this episode was particularly disabling and required a lot of prednisone. I knew I needed to get off it, but needed the help of a rheumatologist. I was referred to the University of Utah, but couldn't get in for months due to Covid. In August, 2020, a stomach ulcer (caused by the prednisone) perforated, resulting in two surgeries and a bad infection. I have never been so ill and weak in my life! It took months to recover to some degree. Then, in June 2021, I was diagnosed with colon cancer and underwent a bowel resection to remove the tumor. Thank goodness, we caught it early and I don't require chemo or radiation! Right now, things seem fine, but who knows what the future will bring?

Hiking and Pickleball: Years ago when we were completely stressed out by caring for Alan's parents, we started doing a Friday Morning Hike to recover our sanity. We have continued this tradition - dodging around health issues - ever since. It is such a relief to be out in nature, which is not concerned with us and our issues. It has become harder for me to keep up, sadly, but we modify as needed. We take our little dog Hazel along on many hikes. Alan has become fond of pickleball and plays with a group most mornings. He took some individual classes with a pickleball pro (yes, there is such a thing!) when we visited my mother in southern California and is steadily improving.

Family: It turns out that COVID is not all bad: the gift of Covid has been that my mother (age 92) and my siblings and I have a conference call every Sunday. It began when Mom and my brother Mark got COVID in CA in December, 2019; they were away from the rest of us and needed support and help. It has continued as a valuable chance to bond together as a family. We soon ran out of patience with the "news only" format and started to tell our stories about a theme each week. Some of our most interesting themes were, "The Day I Almost Died," and "Times I was Helped by Strangers." We are now mounting an organized plan to deal with our family history. My Mom remains a steady matriach who helps hold our family together in many ways. We recently had a family reunion in St. George over Labor Day weekend, with 30 adults and 11 kids in attendance.

We found a family motto which I really like, a Maori saying: "I am born of distinguished people whose legacy shines on me like the sun!"

Alan has five kids that most of you have never met. Daniel lives in Salt Lake and works for IHC. Hyriam (the husband of Alan's daughter Giselle, who died of a brain tumor in 2004) is the pharmacy manager at Costco in Murray, UT. Krista lives near Kansas City and teaches special education. Evan lives in Ft. Worth where he is a manager for Charter Cable. Jonathan is the Technical Manager of the performing arts facility at Pittsburg State (KS) University.

Between us, we have three grandchildren on Spanish speaking missions right now! Mabe we need to learn Spanish . . .

Vickie's kids:

Tom, age 48, works at UPS and lives just a mile away. I feel lucky that Tom, while not living the happiest of lives, is stable and financially secure.

Adam, age 47 lives in Chandler, AZ with his fabulous wife Aimee. Together, they founded and run the Chandler Children's Choir, with 150 young singers. Aimee is the musical director, while

Adam runs the business end. We are going on a performing tour to the UK with them next May. They have four really fun kids, the oldest two now college age.

James, 44, is a gastroenterologist here in Salt Lake City. He is married and has two children. He has been re-fitting a bike of his to be an electric bicycle, which he now calls “Frankenbike.”

Megan, 41, is married and lives in Santa Cruz with her husband Wes. She is currently in sales for a subsidiary of Google, but hopes to quit soon and take to the road with Wes in their converted Sprinter van. She has wanderlust. No children, just a loved little dog named Luna.

We recently visited the Primary Children’s Medical Center to visit the Alvin Gittins portrait of my grandmother, LaVern Parmley, who was the COB of the hospital for twenty years, a major force in its growth and success. While we were there, we looked at some promotional material and found that the VP and Chief of Precision Health and Genomics is none other than Lincoln Nadauld, who I knew as a child. Go, Lincoln! The hospital will celebrate its centennial (100 years) anniversary next May.

Here are some photos:

Vickie, her mother, and kids

