

Len Hart, Family Man, Business Man, Community Leader and Church Member

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of April 16, 2018)

Fanny and I will have been in Oak Ridge for 48 years come September 2018. For all that time we have known the Len Hart family from Len E. Hart, to Len M. Hart and now Len A. Hart, to name only the men of each generation.

All have been members of the Highland View Church of Christ, along with their families. All have been our friends, two of them my coworkers and joint community supporters. We were closest to Len M. and Len A. when our son Zane played football as a youngster with Len A. What fun that is to recall even now.

As many of you realize, Len M. passed away recently, just eighteen months after receiving a lung transplant. In talking with Len A. at the celebration of life for Len M., his father, he and I shared our experiences when our fathers passed away.

Len A. took great comfort in the last weeks and days of his father's life as they had some really good conversations about the important things of life. I can identify there as I was 19 years old when my father passed and I still recall the last conversations we had. They were precious and extremely impactful to me then and even now my father's words are clear in my mind!

Stacy Myers, a friend of Len M. since meeting him in college at David Lipscomb University in Nashville, provided comments at the celebration of Len's life held on March 9, 2018, at the Highland View Church of Christ. Following are excerpts from those remarks:

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Steve Maraboli, in a book entitled, *Life, The Truth, and Being Free*, says, "I don't want my life to be defined by what is etched on a tombstone. I want it to be defined by what is etched in the lives and hearts of those I have touched."

I have never known anyone that epitomized that quote more than Len Hart. Len's life can be characterized by four roles he played in his life.

1. **Family Man:** Son/Father/Grandfather/Husband/Brother. Len was truly dedicated to his family. This could be seen in the "gatherings" in his home, the things he talked about in social conversation, and the miles and miles he drove to see a grandchild play in a ball game.

His house was always full of children, dogs, and friends. I am reminded of a quote from Oliver Gaspartz, in a book entitled, *Pet Humor*, where it says, "Heaven is a place where all the dogs you've ever loved come to greet you. Len will have quite a welcome.

2. **Business Man:** Len began and ran Len Hart Construction, ran the Oak Ridge Bowling Center, owned portions of Hart and Hart Realty, Eddie's Malt Shoppe, and Hartland Estates, and probably others I never knew about.

About 25 years ago our families were vacationing together in Destin, FL, and Len and I went out for a bite to eat. Len asked me to pull over and he got out and walked down a residential street that was part of Crystal Beach Subdivision. When he got back to the car he said, "I am going to build this in Oak Ridge,"

And now we have Willow Place. We also have Westwood and a hundred other homes in town because of his abilities, his attention to detail, and skill in working with some pretty strange customers in building their homes.

3. **Community Leader:** Len was a very active participant in numerous efforts that supported progressive growth in the Oak Ridge community. He was a member of the developer's forum, numerous chamber committees, and worked diligently on the housing task force last year. I never asked him to support any effort in Oak Ridge that he didn't say "Yes."

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His efforts were in support of Blankenship Field, Girls Inc., the Boys and girls Club and an unending list of others. And, as strong a supporter of Oak Ridge High School athletics as there is. I was pleased this past year to present him the Eugene Joyce Lifetime Achievement Award, the Chamber of Commerce's preeminent award at our annual luncheon.

4. **An active member of our family here at Highland View:** He taught classes, served on selection committees for ministers, managed the renovation of this building and many other tasks. In 1992, on a Friday, I received a call from him and he said, "Stace, if you will rent a big truck from Chuck Hope, I will rent another one and we will see if we can get the people of Oak Ridge to fill them up and we will deliver the contents to the victims of hurricane Andrew in Homestead, FL."

We rented those trucks on a Friday expecting them to sit in the parking lot here at the building for a week while this congregation and others in Oak Ridge filled them up. By Monday they were filled and we left on Wednesday for Florida.

He and I drove one truck and others from this congregation drove another along with a 15-passenger van with several other members. I worried the entire way how the eight of us were going to be able to unload two huge trucks by hand.

When we rounded the turn into Homestead, we saw 30 or more 101st Airborne soldiers waiting to unload our trucks. One of the soldiers Len knew, had relatives in Oak Ridge. He was always willing to help others in need.

V. C. Andrews once said, "grief, no matter how you try to cater to its wail, has a way of fading away." Our grief will diminish over time with Len's passing but thankfully his impact on our lives and our community will be everlasting.

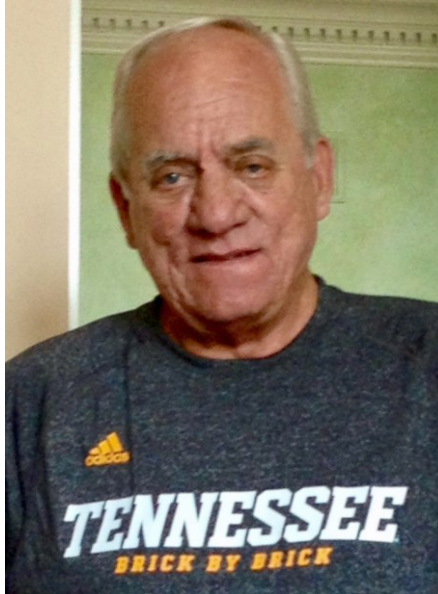
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Thank you, Stacy, for those words of kindness and comfort to the family and those who knew Len.

One last indicator of Len's dedication to supporting sports in Oak Ridge. Robert May, Minister at the Oak Ridge Family Bible Church, and a fellow Chaplain for the Oak Ridge Police Department in speaking with me regarding Len and indicating he hoped I might include something about Len in Historically Speaking, said, "Len found out that my son was selling popcorn to raise money for the ball team and he would drive around our neighborhood and find my son to purchase popcorn from him. He did this many, many times, not just once."

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Len Hart supported Oak Ridge sports, his community, his church and was a dedicated family man



Stacy Myers and Len were good friends from college until Len's death