

*In memoriam:***Stephen T. Griebing, 87**

by Margi Griebing-Haigh



Stephen T. Griebing, 87, of Akron, OH, passed away peacefully at home after a brief but rapid decline, on March 20, 2020.

He was born during a snowstorm in a small house on the Portage Lakes in Akron on December 10, 1932, to Louis George Griebing and Genevieve Eleanor (né Wilson) Griebing. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Mary Ann (né Rimmel), his daughters Karen Griebing (Robin Brown) and Margi Griebing-Haigh (Scott Haigh), and granddaughter Gabrielle Haigh (Mark Nelson). He was an affectionate, gentle, and playful patriarch who was deeply committed to the happiness, security, and dreams of his family.

Mr. Griebing graduated in 1950 from Garfield High School in Akron, earning the “Most Sophisticated” award during his senior year. He attended Mount Union College, graduating in 1954 with a BS degree in Chemistry. He undertook further studies at Ohio State University.

During his late teenage years and into college, he taught himself to play the piano and cello, and, assiduously studying the music of his favorites, Beethoven, Debussy, and Rachmaninoff, he taught himself to compose music. His early output included songs to the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay, sonatas for cello and piano, and a lushly beautiful and romantic four-movement symphony, to name a few. It was during his studies at Ohio State, while playing cello in the university orchestra, that he met his bride, Mary Ann, who was playing violin in the orchestra. Together they never tired of reminiscing about their whirlwind love-at-first-sight courtship, sudden engagement, and deep devotion to one-another. They were married in 1956.

Mr. Griebing started his professional career in 1954 as an intern in the chemistry department at the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company in Akron. His exceptional talents were quickly noticed, and he was offered a position in the engineering department. He was transferred to the company's plant in Brentford (near London) UK, from 1963-7. He and his young family settled in Wimbledon, immersed themselves in the new culture, and traveled extensively in Europe. An asset to Firestone for forty years, he earned four patents for tire design and was awarded the President's Award for Original and Creative Thinking, an award for Innovative and Creative Achievement, and honors from the American Society of Patent Holders.

Upon returning to Akron in 1967, Mr. Griebing joined the Akron Symphony Chorus, and upon the completion of the Blossom Music Center in 1968 the entire family participated in the opening season (and many thereafter) as members of the Blossom Festival Chorus, singing with the Cleveland Orchestra and many renowned conductors. Much time was spent playing chamber music with friends, composing, and attending concerts around Northeast Ohio. The family was named "Musical Family of the Year" by two Ohio Governors: once in 1974 and again in 2004. Mr. Griebing was also a member of the Tuesday Musical Club and Friends of Music. He served for years as a judge for the junior composition and piano divisions of the National Federation of Music Clubs.

A modest but deeply curious man, Mr. Griebing was fearless when it came to plunging into new creative endeavors: he was a skillful photographer with his own professional-grade darkroom, a gifted landscape painter, and an excellent carpenter who built furniture and nearly single-handedly remodelled the family home with lovely book-cases, hand-crafted cabinets, and additions. He sewed kitchen curtains and Halloween costumes and baked pies and holiday Stollen. Another hobby that he pursued fervently for his entire lifetime was that of model aircraft building. A member and sometimes officer of the Cleveland Free Flight Society, he became the second most decorated free flight modeler in the USA, winning hundreds of timed flights with his WWI and WWII models as well as those of his own design. He was awarded the Cleveland National Air Race Premium Award for Free Flight in 1997. The family Christmas tree was charmingly decorated with the smallest of his balsa wood model airplanes.

Perhaps Mr. Griebing's most lasting legacy will be his compositions, which have been performed across the USA and in many other countries, as well as published and recorded. His orchestral works received performances by the Akron Symphony Orchestra under Louis Lane, the Springfield Symphony under John Ferritto, and the Warsaw National Philharmonice Orchestra under Jerzy Swoboda, among others. A very active member of the Cleveland Composers Guild and the American Society for

Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), he composed most often for members of his family and for the many musicians in his circle of admirers and friends. Self-critical and a perfectionist, he earned something of a reputation for subjecting musicians to his last minute revisions! His music was recently characterized as sounding “kind,” a truly welcome balm in these turbulent times.

Paraphrasing a close friend’s remarks: “Among the many sterling qualities he possessed, perhaps one stands out: the ability to make every person he encountered feel special by showing genuine interest in what that individual had to say. What a rare phenomenon that is, and how thankful we are for what he taught us about goodness, humility, and strength.”

A memorial concert of the music of Stephen T. Griebing will be scheduled at a later date and will be open to the public. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Cleveland’s classical radio station WCLV 104.9 FM or to The Cleveland Orchestra.

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