



David Tiller

October 9, 1942 - January 10, 2012

David J. Tiller

David John Tiller, age 69, died peacefully at his home in Stambaugh Township, Iron River, MI on January 10, 2012, with family by his side, after a brief illness.

David Tiller was born October 9, 1942 in Superior, WI to Helmer and Junice (Severson) Tiller, both of Norwegian descent. After WWII, the family moved back to their home town of Eau Claire, WI where David spent his childhood and young adulthood. From 1960 to 1964, David served in the U.S. Marine Corps at Twenty-nine Palms, CA , attaining the rank of Corporal. There he made a treasured life-long friend, George Patterson (DeSoto, MO, surviving). After completing his service, he obtained a BS degree from University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire. He lived for a year in Vancouver, BC before settling in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, first in Beechwood and later in Stambaugh Township, MI.

David worked for 18 years as a biologist for White Water Associates, Amasa, using his exceptional abilities in bird, mammal, and plant identification, and all outdoor skills. Dave was a talented observer of people, the land, and all living things. Other work included building log homes, making natural crafts, serving as a VA benefit counselor, and working in a home for mentally-challenged adults. Dave was a charter member of both Lee LeBlanc Audubon Club (and initiated the Christmas Bird Count in Iron County) and the Iron County Watershed Coalition, and a past president of Trout Unlimited. David led the

way in the restoration of the Iron River riparian area, obtaining grants and designing techniques to cover mining waste rock and restore native plant species. Dave was privileged to participate with his wife Beth as coauthors (with Dr. Jim Halfpenny and Meghan Wallis-Murphy) on a mammal tracking book, *Track Plates for Mammals*, published by A Naturalist's World, Gardiner, MT, 2009.

For David, the simple life was second nature. He built a scribed log home of white spruce on his 40 acres where he maintained a large garden, a blueberry patch, and a sugar bush. He enjoyed fly fishing, deer hunting, and grouse and pheasant hunting with his springer spaniel. Dave and his wife Beth reveled in birdwatching, mammal tracking, botanizing, canoeing, camping and kayaking. They built many memories together with trips to Yellowstone, North Dakota, Missouri, southeast Arizona, Texas, much of the U.P. and even the Galapagos Islands of Ecuador. Dave was an avid reader and through this medium taught himself much of the knowledge that served him so well. He had an impeccable memory of everything he read, being able to name characters of novels he encountered over 40 years ago.

He is survived by his long time partner and cherished wife, Elizabeth "Beth" (Rogers) Tiller, Ph.D., with whom he shared his passions for the simple life and the natural world, working side by side as biologists for many years and camping and traveling together. He is also survived by his two beloved sons by a previous marriage (to Margaret Scheffer, Iron River, also surviving): Gabriel Tiller (Portland, OR) and Raphael Tiller (Duluth, MN). He once said that having children was like having the most wonderful garden imaginable - watching each child grow and change, with new delights constantly appearing. He is also survived by a sister, Susan Partlow-Ottum (Ron) (New Auburn, WI), two nephews and a niece, and an aunt and uncle. He leaves behind a plethora of friends, of varied ages, from every stage of his life. You are too numerous to name, but know that he relished every opportunity to connect and share stories, and appreciated all your phone calls, visits, and kindnesses over the years. He leaves his Springer, Tove, who provided endless joy to

Beth.

David will be remembered as a peacemaker - a quiet man who was honest in all his dealings, and kind and understanding of others. He had a ready sense of humor that centered on an appreciation of the absurd in life and always enjoyed a good laugh. Borrowing from naturalist Loren Eiseley, it could be said of David that "he loved this good Earth, but could not stay."

The family will hold a memorial for family and friends in the spring. Memorial contributions may be made to the Iron County Cancer Unit, the West Iron District Library, the Beechwood Historical Society, the Iron County Watershed Coalition, or another charity or cause that reflects his life and loves.

Condolences to the family of David Tiller may be expressed online at nashfuneralhome.net

The family has entrusted the Nash Funeral Home of Crystal Falls with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

JN

“ Gabe, Raef, and family,
I am sorry to hear about your dad passing. Alot of the things that i remember growing up were helping you dad (my first job) skinning the logs for his cabin and him spending time and explaining about the green house, and how things work. He was truely a one of a kind and will be greatly be missed.

Best wishes Jason

Jason High - Kenosha, WI - Friend / Neighbor - January 31, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DF

“ Rafe, Gabe, and family,
I am so sorry to hear of the passing of Dave. He was truly a great human being, always striving to make improvements in the world around him and seeking to create the perfect balance between the realm of man and that of the natural world. We have much to learn from his example as stewards of the earth. His dedication to conservation should be a reminder to us all of what kind of legacy we will leave behind when we are gone. Dave should be proud of the legacy and lessons he has left us. Deepest condolences.

Dave Campaign

Dave Campaign - Hancock, MI - friend - January 27, 2012 at 12:00 AM

JF

“ Dear Beth, Rafe, Gabe, and all the friends and family of Dave Tiller,

My deepest sympathy for your recent loss. Dave was a wonderful man, and someone who I think of regularly and will very much miss. He was instrumental in my life as I began in my career - he was a mentor, not just to me professionally, but personally too - his passion for the environment and for the U.P. and Iron County was second to none, and he certainly helped support me and inspire me during my time in Iron River. His love and appreciation for the simpler things in life - gardening, fishing, and enjoying friends and family was something that made a lasting impression on me.

I started my first garden this summer, and I thought very much that he would be proud of it and sent him a note telling him so. And it is a rare day when I see the craziness in politics and don't stop a moment to wonder what Dave might be thinking - we used to commiserate about the silliness of it all, and ponder why more people can't just be a little more logical, a little more sympathetic, and use a little more common sense.

I know this is a difficult time, and I'm sad to hear that he has left us. But I am grateful for all the good memories he has left behind - the days canoeing the Iron River, the cookouts at his cabin, and the many other good conversations and time we spent together - and I hope that you too can find comfort and solace knowing what a great man he was, and how he touched so many in his life. He lives on in our hearts and minds.

*Sincerely,
Jim Bond*

Jim Bond - Helena, MT - Friend - January 18, 2012 at 12:00 AM

DF

“ Gabe, Rafe & Family,
I am so sorry for the loss of Dave. My heart broke when I heard of his passing. I can remember as a teenager going with my parents to the Tiller home. He always asked about my parents when I seen him in the store in passing and was a very nice and sweet man. I will miss his kind words and talks. May God Keep you and help you though this time of loss.
Darla & Scott

Darla Barnhart Sprague - Iron River, MI - Friend of the Family - January 15, 2012 at 12:00 AM

IF

“ For David and his beloved wife, Elizabeth - to remember their love of this good Earth, and to help keep the woodfire burning brightly.

Inge Meldgaard - Belgrave Heights - Friend - January 15, 2012 at 12:00 AM

GA

“ Dave was one of the first people I met when I moved to the Upper Peninsula back in 1982 - A quiet, funny man with a kind heart....

Gail Ouimette - Bend, OR - acquaintance - January 13, 2012 at 12:00 AM

SA

“ For Dave's loved ones, I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences for your loss.

Having served on the Iron County Conservation District Board with hm, I know first hand his committment to our natural world, as well as his remarkable intellect and peace loving personality. Certainly our area has lost a tireless worker for the environment, but those who knew Dave also know we have lost a remarkable person. For many of us involved in local politics, he was like a breath of fresh air, pure and energizing. We were blessed to share his life, however brief, and I am sure his efforts while amongst us will reap rewards for generations to come. May your pride in him, and your memories, bring you peace.

Sharon Eaton - Alpha, MI - acquaintance - January 12, 2012 at 12:00 AM