

## Amedisys Hospice Honors a Military Officer's Life and Unlikely Love Story Pawleys Island South Carolina

Perhaps you could say he has always been ahead of the curve, enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1973 at the age of 17. Stephen Shaffer built his life around serving his country. A Staff Sargent in the Marines during the Vietnam era and a tour of duty in Desert Storm, he later re-enlisted in the Army as a Sargent so that he could go back for a second tour and finish what he had started. Shaffer was an expert marksman along with many other accolades; he worked as a ground troop, and in logistics and communications.

The truly honorable decision to join the military caused Staff Sargent Shaffer many trials and tribulations with his family. He was overseas and unable to be present for his mother's passing and his marriage and children fell by the wayside under the stress of military life.

In the 1990's Shaffer and his future wife Sally would be team mates on an online game of Euchre. They began to help each other through troubled times and offer advice on life's many obstacles. They vowed that if they were ever single at the same time, God would work it out and they would meet each other.

In 1999 both Stephen and Sally were single. Not knowing what to expect or even having seen a picture, Stephen showed up on Sally's door step. It was love at first sight and they were never apart again. Six months later they would be married in 2000.

An internet gaming friendship and good timing spawned a, at the time unheard of, lasting love. During the course of their marriage Sally recognized that Stephen was suffering from the effects of PTSD and got him the help he needed. He

was able to rekindle once broken relationships with friends and family. He in turn, as couples do, helped bring her back to life and the marriage was all that they had hoped for.

In 2011 Stephen and Sally moved to Conway South Carolina and bought a place to retire and live the "American dream". Once again ahead of the curve, Stephen was diagnosed with cancer at age 55. His type of cancer was a result of exposure while in the military. From start to finish Stephen fought like a champ, never one to complain of pain from all of the chemo, radiation, and surgeries.

Stephen eventually made the decision to forgo treatments and make the most of his time. Amedisys Hospice is honored to have cared for a man who risked his life for our freedom.

To pay tribute to his life of service and love Amedisys Hospice volunteers created a one of a kind piece. A black and white photo of Sally and Stephen holding hands is framed by calligraphy written Bible verses Romans 12:12, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:8, John15:13, and part of the Marine Corps Creed.



Submitted by Kelli Jayroe, Volunteer Coordinator Amedisys Hospice Pawleys Island South Carolina