

Dear friends, relations, and colleagues,

Most of you have heard through the grapevine that my husband, Tom Williams, passed away in his sleep on March 5th. Together we had fought the deterioration and indignities that accompany Alzheimer's Disease, for longer than the 5 years since it had been diagnosed. When I could no longer keep him safe at home without 24-hour care, I looked for care facilities in Portland, but he wanted to go home to Georgia. So, we moved him to a care facility near Athens, GA where his sister Claudia and brother-in-law Joel live. For two years Claudia saw him multiple times per week, and saw to his medical appointments and daily living needs. I saw him for a long weekend every month. Since last Thanksgiving, he grew increasingly agitated and irrational, and had to be moved to a locked memory care facility that could handle his outbursts. His physical and cognitive condition deteriorated rapidly, and when he passed away, his sister and I were happy that he didn't have to continue living in such misery.



Naomi and Tom

Tom was a lively, energetic, gentle but outspoken individual, whom I loved. There was no one with an eye like his, trained over 20+ years of teaching college technical theatre at Mercer University, Knox College, and Castleton State College in Vermont. Soon after meeting him, I learned he could focus a room of adjustable lighting in minutes, not hours, and he became my favorite subcontractor for church and residential projects. I learned so much from him, including stuff like metaphor and parallels and allegories, which had always been elusive to me in literature classes. But when you saw a ton of plays with Tom, or watched an orchestra performance, or watched TV, you learned a lot from him. He wasn't a religious man at all, but he read Archeology magazines and knew biblical history and artifacts like a master.

Tom was lost after moving to Troy in 1998, leaving Castleton College in order to be with me (of all silly things), but then he took Jan Moyer's Landscape Lighting Institute, and he was hooked on a field that used both his ability to use tools and run electrical power, as well as his ability to create visual scenes in the landscape. It was the perfect endeavor for him, and with the help of an excellent bookkeeper, he ran his landscape lighting business for about 10 years. Most of his work was in the Greenwich CT area. Moving to Portland in 2009 was hard on him. He never was able to build up his design business again, partly because of his declining memory. But he was a home partner in my work to help improve LEDs by working for Pacific NW National Laboratory.

The best news for me is that since his passing, I have been flooded with happy memories of the Tom I married, and absolutely deluged by mail and emails and calls and flowers from colleagues, students, friends, and relatives. It has been a joy, in spite of the sadness. But Tom is out of misery now, and

probably fighting with his best friend Anne Halliday over some piece of architectural salvage in heaven's antique stores.

So many people have expressed love for Tom and me, and asked if there is a way to send a tribute. There is no expectation for this, but if you feel compelled, here are a few alternatives. The first is to a wonderful youth theatre group in the Athens, GA area. This group is extraordinary and introduces hundreds of kids to the magic of plays, performance, and technical work that supports that art. Tom was captivated by the high quality of work by this group. The Oconee Youth Playhouse: [www.oconeeyouthplayhouse.com](http://www.oconeeyouthplayhouse.com)

The second is The Alzheimer's Association, which has been such a wonderful support for me as Tom and I traveled this heartbreaking path. It supports research, but also offers invaluable services to those experiencing dementia and their caregivers. The Alzheimer's Association: [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

Tom's family and I appreciate your concern and love, and will send details of a family gathering in Georgia and a celebration of his life in Portland later in the year.

Naomi



Photos provided courtesy of Paul Welty, CLVLT, COLD (right), pictured here with Tom.