



Stephen Browning Agard, Professor Emeritus in the School of Mathematics at the University of Minnesota died unexpectedly of heart failure at his home in Wisconsin on August 16, 2021. His wife of 38 years Leslie (Mirza) Janecky Agard preceded him in death in 2015. He is survived by his son Nathan (Nicole) Agard and step-daughter Heidi Jones. From earlier marriages he is survived by sons David (Patricia), Agard, Martin (Ashley) Agard, and Soren (Darla) Agard. He is also survived by nine grandchildren: Hannah (Alex Bachtel), Rebekah, Tyler, Sarah, Dylan, Drew, Montgomery, Beau, and Frederick. Incidentally, the photo above finds Steve in April of 2021 at the Pandemic delayed “reenactment” wedding reception of his granddaughter Hannah Agard, moments after discovering that he was to be a great-grandfather in October. Alas, they will not meet.

A native of Princeton, New Jersey, Steve was born November 4, 1937, the son of Frederick Browning Agard and Frances Kinney Moore Agard; his only sibling was older half-sister Phoebe (Leigh) Moore. The family settled in Ithaca, NY where Steve would graduate from Ithaca High School and matriculate at Swarthmore College where he would be a member of the baseball team. Subsequently, he pursued graduate studies and earned his Ph.D. in Mathematics from the University of Michigan in 1965. The pioneering work in his thesis, under the direction of the distinguished complex analyst Fred Gehring, showed that quasiconformal mappings could be defined using only preservation of angular measure up to a uniformly bounded factor. Steve joined the faculty of the School of Mathematics at the University of Minnesota in 1967 after spending two years at Stanford University as an Instructor. At the University of Minnesota, Steve produced his most famous work, a penetrating study that extended Mostow’s rigidity theorem to a larger class of groups, while continuing to make important contributions in the area of quasiconformal mappings. Steve made many major contributions to the functioning of the

department, serving as Director of Undergraduate Studies from 1991 to 1995 and coordinating the actuarial science program for 19 years, from 1987 to his retirement in 2006. Approximately 400 students in the actuarial program graduated under Steve's direction. When undergraduate senior projects were instituted in the late 1990's, Steve was in great demand by the students as a project mentor and he responded enthusiastically, guiding around five students each academic year.

Steve's retirement years right up to his death were without question an extension of activities relating to his passions of family history, craftsmanship, and sports.

Steve was a serious genealogy enthusiast. He spent many years continuing the work of his father Frederick (Fritz) who published "Agards in America" in 1976. Steve often made trips in support of this effort and could be found traipsing through cemeteries in his quest to update, expand, and fill in (if possible) any missing stories from the family's history. He was always willing to tackle a genealogy mystery on behalf of anyone, and thoroughly enjoyed the sharing of his findings (often pages filled with arrows, lines, and scribbles on the margins).

Steve had an enthusiasm for carpentry and other forms of craftsmanship. He maintained a vast set of tools from the mundane to the exotic and had a work room wherever he lived. His travels to help with projects in kitchen expansions, decks, and artistic wine cellars. He even built more than one sauna. The crowning achievement was his residence (referred to him as the "farm"). Purchased in the 1970s as a second home, it was ramshackle cottage (with an outhouse!), dilapidated barn and some acreage. Over the decades, he personally built a wonderful new house with a gazebo, refurbished the barn, and planted a ten thousand trees that have partially harvested to date. Additionally, he added in a sizeable garden (visible from satellite by Google Earth) from which he most prized the strawberries and blueberries to be enjoyed with his morning cereal.

After transitioning to softball (fast-pitch then slow pitch) he relished his more than 50 years playing softball in the greater twin cities region even managing to participate in games involving his sons. As the years passed, he embarked on the Super Senior softball scene traveling all over the country for national tournaments in the "80-plus" age group. In fact, he had just completed a trip to Ohio for such an event, and was already plotting the next opportunity to travel. An avid golfer for nearly 70 years, he maintained his 14 point handicap for many years and would regularly play numerous rounds a year, likely all with some form of wager on the outcome. He rarely failed to travel without his clubs, and managed to play with all his sons and even some grandsons. He stayed a quality player long enough to shoot better than his age, fashioning a score of 79 after turning 80 years of age.

Lastly, Steve was always willing to end a day with perhaps a lively card game of any sort and perhaps some sweet red wine or a brandy. He would stay up late if needed.

Dave Agard