

Mark Krey Funeral – December 16, 2019  
Rev. Arthur Murray

Mark Krey, Age 56 of New Hope passed away unexpectedly on November 24, 2019. Preceded in death by father Mike Krey Sr. Survived by loving wife of 21 years, Cindy; children Samantha (Steffen) Isane, Will and Jennifer; grandchildren Carson, Wyatt and Freya; mother Carol Krey; brothers Mike Jr. (Karla), Tom (Tammy), Bob (Cheryl) and Tim (Jodi); nieces; nephews; other relatives; and many friends. Mark was a cancer survivor who lived each day to the fullest.

Blessed be the life and memory of Mark David Krey.

Mark's mother, Carol, told me a story about her son. Many years ago, he was skiing with his brother and uncle out in Colorado. They happened to be skiing under the chair lift and were moving pretty fast, which from what I hear would have been normal for Mark. I don't know whether he didn't see the bump coming, but it seems it caught him by surprise.

Now, we have to give Carol a bit of a pass on this, because she did get the information second hand, but apparently after Mark hit the bump, there were flips and cartwheels, and all kinds of gymnastics involved before Mark eventually landed on his feet, facing the right way and just kept on going. I tried to fact check the story, but she Carol played her cards pretty close to her chest and I didn't get the name of the brother he was with... in the end, though the point of the story was that Mark recovered, he stayed on his feet, and everyone on the chair lift burst into yells and cheers and applause... well maybe not applause... that's pretty hard with ski gear on. Mark survived and everyone was cheering him on.

Mark survived and everyone was cheering him on. It wasn't the only time that would happen. From the day in March of 2006, when Mark was diagnosed with Chronic Myeloid Leukemia, from that date on, his survival skills kicked into high gear, and everyone was cheering him on as he beat one form of cancer or infection after another. But Mark learned to be tough a strong early on.

Growing up as second of five boys, Mark was out and about from as early as anyone can remember. The family moved to White Bear Lake when Mark was seven, and he and the rest of his brothers grew up surrounded by farm fields with lots of room to roam. Summer or winter, he was outdoors: snowmobiling, fishing, racing sail boats on the lake, hunting around the area, and lots of swimming and all sorts of other fun that never got reported. Skiing, hunting and fishing were integral parts of family life.

Mark played hockey and apparently was a tough son of a .... (oh, sorry, I wasn't supposed to quote that part) ... well, let's put it this way: Mark was probably even better at football (all-conference at Hill-Murray High School) than hockey and he may have brought some of his football skills to his hockey game.

Mark attended St Cloud State and transferred to Dundwoody Inst. for a Degree in Construction Management. He worked for various companies in Drywall and construction management over the years, gained a well-deserved reputation for being a hard worker, and gained friends and experience along the way.

Mark was married to Rebecca Carroll in 1987 and his first daughter, Samantha Lynn Krey was born in January, 1988.

Cindy told me that family was always important to Mark, and that he especially looked up to his Grandma Evelyn Bierel (Bi-rel ). He admired who she was and where she came from, and he respected her as a strong woman with a kind heart.

Mark met his soul mate and best friend, Cindy, in 1997, when they were set up by the rest of the ski team at a St Paul Sainys game. They were married in this church on April 1998. Two kids made the family complete, Will first and then Jenny.

The first cancer diagnosis came when Jenny was 4, Will was in kindergarten, and Samantha was in high school. Of course, it turned the family's life upside down, but Mark was strong and a survivor. After all, he had survived growing up with four brothers! Cindy says he always knew he would beat the odds and so did she. It wasn't an easy road. There were many extended hospital stays due to the bone marrow transplant and many complications. Mark's donor was his big brother, Mike Jr. The gift that you gave, Mike, will never be forgotten by Cindy and all the family.

But Mark was a survivor and before long he was back to doing what he loved. He was a family man and he, Cindy, and the kids did everything together.

Anniversaries, Christmases and birthdays were celebrated together as a family.

Babysitters were not part of the mix. They camped and fished, the kids learned to fly fish, golf, hike and, of course, ski. No one was getting out of this family without learning to ski! They went to Disney World but were much more likely to spend family time in Luck, Wisconsin where Mark taught the kids how to ride dirt bikes, 4 wheelers, how to set up a deer stand and fish. Mark took time to teach the kids lifelong sports and the love of the outdoors.

Over the years, that love of teaching, coaching and mentoring was felt by many others, as is evidenced by so many in attendance here today. You see, when Mark did pull off his survival tricks, whether it was on the mountain, or in life, he wasn't doing it for the applause. He did it just because that's who he was that's what he did. He was authentic. He was himself. And everyone around him knew it. He passed on his love of skiing, hunting and the outdoors not because it made people love and respect him, though it did. He passed it on because he truly loved the outdoors and being up on that mountain and he wanted you to love it to.

We didn't see Mark in church a lot. He always showed up for his kids and family, but his temple was the outdoors. Mark connected with God through nature. It could be on the mountain, it could be on the river or lake, or sitting in his deer stand. This year when he was out in the deer stand he started to come back with stories about seeing an "aura." Like the deer was "surrounded by an aura." He was blown away by it. It didn't matter to him whether he came back with anything or not. The experience of being out there became mystical to him. He knew he was connecting with something beyond himself, something that he could not understand.

We are in the season of Advent, here at church. The reading we heard just a week ago from the prophet Isaiah gives us a powerful image of heaven. Isaiah describes heaven as God's holy mountain. God's holy mountain. It is a place of peace. A place of a new world order. It is a place where as Isaiah says the Leopard will lie down with the baby goat, and the Lion and the calf will eat together... the wolf and the baby lamb will snuggle up and take a nap (I'm paraphrasing here...). In other words, it is a place where the wild and the domestic will live in harmony: where men will no longer need to hide in deer stands in order to be near the wild deer, because the aura will be over both of them. The line between predator and prey will disappear. And all this will happen on God's holy mountain.

Mark went to the mountain to die. Cindy knew it. Jenny and Will knew it. The dogs knew it. He said his good-byes. He packed up the ski gear one last time. He was determined to make this trip with his daughter. His family had noticed that he had stopped making plans beyond the trip to Colorado a while back. He had been talking about who was going to Will elk hunting instead of him.

He and Jenny had a beautiful day skiing on perfect snow under perfect skies. He called Cindy to tell her how amazing it was. It was a perfect day. And then the next day, he was gone. He went to God's holy mountain. It was the prophet Isaiah's vision of heaven, and Mark's too.

At the beginning and the end of the service today, we are hearing Jake and Solveig perform songs by Tom Petty. Tom Petty was an artist that Cindy and Mark both loved and heard perform live.

At the start of the service we heard these words:

You belong among the wildflowers  
You belong in a boat out at sea  
You belong with your love on your arm  
You belong somewhere you feel free

The promise we have, the promise that we celebrate today is that Mark is free, and that Mark does have love on his arm, now and forever. Our reading from Romans contained these words: “nothing in life or death can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Mark is now held by eternal love and nothing can take that away. It is this eternal love, the love that is at the heart of the universe to whom we entrust Mark. It is by this love that we stay connected to Mark, if though we will be apart for a little while.

In a moment we will hear these words, also from Tom Petty:

Well, some say life will beat you down  
Break your heart, steal your crown  
So I've started out for God knows where  
I guess I'll know when I get there

With all that Mark went through in his life, the amazing highs of almost flying in love, and on the slopes, and the struggles mixed in between, Mark never got beaten down. Even in the end, when Mark said good-bye and left for the mountain with Jenny, he wasn't defeated, he wasn't beaten down. He just knew that as St. Paul said, he had “fought the good fight and he had finished the race.”

Tom Petty had it right – God does know where we are going – and we will know too, when we get there. In the meantime we live in faith, and the promise of our faith is this: that the place we are going, God's holy mountain, is good. Very good. On that holy mountain there is no more crying, no more pain, no more separation between us and the God, been us and God's creatures. No more separation between us and one another. All is made well. All will be well. And we will see Mark and one another again there, in that place, very soon. Amen.