

I'm up here as a friend. But also to take credit for introducing Barbara Eastman and Stephen.

When Stephen arrived in Toronto, I decided that they should meet – that, at the very least, they could become friends as well.

I attested to each that the other was brilliant, had a great heart, and, was passionate about those few things worth being passionate about.

I warned Barbara that Stephen would have an abiding crush on politics, but wouldn't waste time being heartsick about anything for long.

My first impression of Stephen came in an alarming office memo in the mid Seventies. The forces of Bob Stanfield's opposition were to be replenished by one of Margaret Thatcher's young revolutionaries.

It nearly made one shudder.

Approaching was surely a man of gravitas, a pen and strategist of high seriousness, who would inspire order and more sober thinking.

Yet, at once, and ever since, everything about him made me smile.

He was sunny, with a very sharp wit.

Commenting on our high regard for our own manners he once observed that Canadians are the only people in the world who say thank-you, to bank machines. Or, that politicians in Ontario think the only solution to higher energy prices is lower energy_prices.

He was ambitious, competitive and worked very hard.

But other qualities betrayed any chance of Stephen ever being charismatic, in those dark Machiavellian terms we hear about from history or from abroad.

It was alright that he was tall, attractive, successful and well spoken. Unfortunately, he also had no sense of time; he could not withhold from any audience anything they needed to know. And he literally vibrated with energy.

Stephen lacked reserve for two wonderful reasons.

First, decency – that is, moral integrity, kindness and good will. In friendship, he had no portfolio management skills whatsoever. Our prospects were always up and our ranks were constantly expanding.

And second, enthusiasm – not something particularly infectious in high finance or Tory politics.

It is a pity he won't be taking another run at public office. But not because he mastered the subtleties of the so-called, real world, but because he possessed the talents of a great builder.

W. H. Auden, who knew love and genius, wrote this about W. B. Yeats: “You were silly like us; your gift survived it all.”

Stephen's gifts—decency and enthusiasm—make all good things possible. And for each Stephen will be especially missed and his memory a blessing to us all.

Delivered by Les Horswill, at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club, Toronto, April 7, 2008

Note: Barbara Eastman was Stephen Probyn's wife.