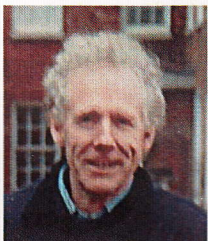


Peter Somerville

Jan. 6, 1941 — Jan. 19, 2014



As a boy in London, Peter was fascinated with scientific experiments. When his mother bought one of the first indestructible polythene washing-up bowls, Peter decided that he and his younger sister Jan should test this claim. He persuaded Jan to sit in the bowl at the top of the stairs, gave the bowl a slight push, and sent all cascading toward the bottom. But the bowl was not destroyed and fortunately, neither was Jan.

Peter helped Jan solve other technical problems. When he saw Jan polishing the chrome on her bicycle, he advised her to apply a bit of elbow grease, and then, ever helpful, sent her to the hardware store to buy a fresh jar of elbow grease.

Peter was studious and thought studying was cool, an attitude that won him a scholarship to a public school. While there he worked tirelessly and earned a scholarship to Cambridge University. He spent his summer before university as a camp counselor in Canada and then traveled across the US by Greyhound bus. A highlight of that trip was walking to the bottom of the Grand Canyon and back up in a single day.

At Cambridge his achievements were many. He broke the university record for glugging down the quickest Yard of Ale. He also achieved his degree in engineering in two years, giving him time to prepare for the Cambridge Expedition to the Karakoram Mountains in Pakistan to measure the change in glacier activity. Peter was the expedition's truck mechanic, photographer, and sound recorder. His challenges included pulling one of their two trucks back onto the mountain road after its rear wheel crushed the edge. After the expedition, he returned to Cambridge for his third year and earned another degree in economics.

After university Peter hopped aboard his motorcycle, traveled across Europe, down through Spain, and across to Gibraltar. He returned to start a new job at a telephone manufacturing company, but eventually found his home at IBM, where he worked for 26 years. While there he was granted many patents, including one for creating IBM's fax software. In 1988, while Peter was on an IBM assignment in the US, brought here to save the image lab, he met Debbie, who was documenting IBM software. Their friendship grew into love, and when Peter returned to England in 1990, he asked Debbie to join him, and she did the following year. They wed on May 6, 1992, uniting two families, which included Peter's daughter Annabel and Debbie's children Robert and Michelle.

They lived in England near Stratford Upon Avon until June 1996, when they returned to America, settling in Glen Echo. Debbie wanted to be as close to the park as possible, and might have considered a yurt were they being offered for residential housing.

Peter found work as a contractor to GEICO, where he helped design a system that sent images of injured cars to multiple computers and generally streamlined claims processing. He also began volunteering at Glen Echo Park, helping with projects to repair the Spanish Ballroom, the Bumper Car Pavilion, and the Minnehaha Creek. He became active in the Glen Echo Park Foundation and helped secure a grant to restore the carousel. He began filming NPS events and Adventure Theatre productions, and eventually joined the board of the theater. He spent so much time helping at the park that people were often surprised to discover he also had a full time day job. But the park was dear to Peter's heart, and contributing to it was one of his greatest joys.