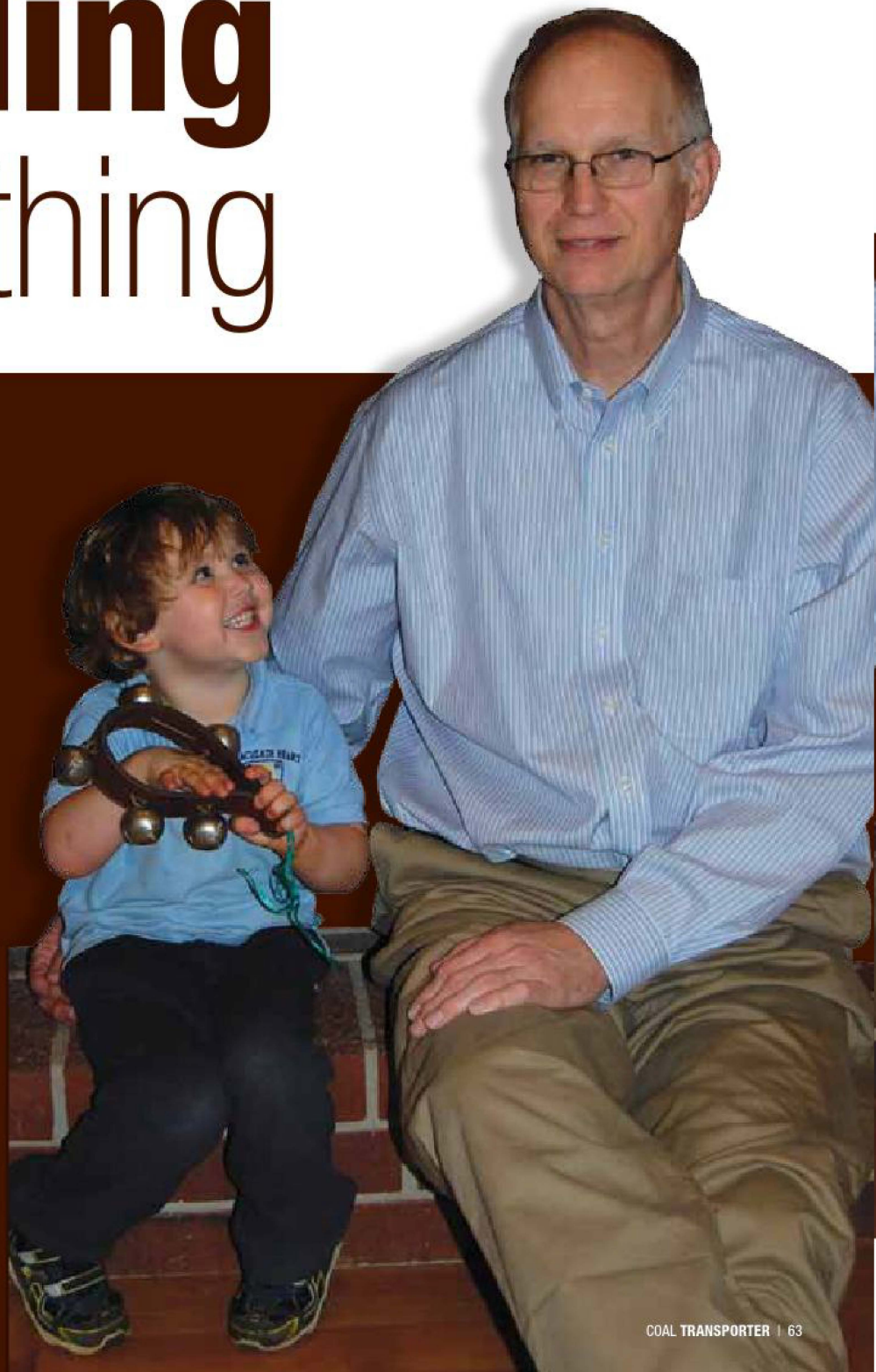


# Always Building Something

Steve Sharp was born in West Plains, Missouri on January 11, 1954. His father, Gerald, or Jerry as everyone called him, was a salesman for the Springfield Paper Company of Springfield, Missouri. His only sibling, an older sister Mallory, was born in 1950 in Kilgore, Texas, home of the Kilgore Rangerettes. Jerry was working in the Texas oil fields at the time. His mother Dorothy, an English major in college, was working at the local newspaper in Texas when she and Jerry met. Dorothy stayed home to raise the kids but later worked as a Reference Librarian for the Northwest Arkansas Regional Library in Harrison.

When Steve was 6 months old, his dad bought a small drive-in restaurant in Harrison, Arkansas, a small town that was one of the stops on his sales route. Harrison is located about 140 miles north of Little Rock. Steve's dad stayed in the restaurant business in Harrison for most of his career, the only exception being a short lived venture in a women's retail clothing business. His last restaurant before he retired was called Master Chef.



## Tom Sawyer meets Jimmy Neutron meets Led Zeppelin

Growing up in a small town in northwestern Arkansas was great. Both of Steve's parents were very tall and as it turns out, so was he. That made him very popular in organized sports, beginning with Lierle League in grade school. Steve and his friends played basketball, football and rode bikes pretty much year round, at least when their parents didn't make them do something else. He also spent a lot of time wading up and down Crooked Creek, occasionally tossing in his line to catch a fish or two. Steve and his friends would wander through the woods and fields, checking out the ponds around the neighborhood which was built just on the edge of the developed portion of the town. One can almost imagine Tom Sawyer tagging along for an adventure or two. Across the street from his house was a cow pasture with a barn.

While he may have led a somewhat carefree childhood, Steve was curious and interested how things worked. He enjoyed working math problems, and studying anything mechanical or scientific. In 1972, his high school counselor advised him to pick anything except engineering as a career. He was already displaying a high aptitude for engineering, but at the time there were thousands of engineers out of work and looking for jobs as a result large layoffs in the aerospace industry. "One young man with a Master's Degree in Civil Engineering who lived down the street from us in Harrison was painting houses because he couldn't find an engineering job." But Steve didn't listen to his counselor. He had his heart set on engineering.

As a teenager, Steve helped out at his Dad's restaurant. He never cooked but did every other job at the restaurant at one time or another. When he was 17, he spent the summer helping to build a highway by-pass around Harrison. The bypass was built on the old Missouri and North Arkansas Railroad right-of-way. Music was also a passion of Steve's. In junior high, Steve and several friends started a rock band. Steve learned to play the bass guitar and the group played for a number of dances at churches, community meeting rooms, and at a local car dealership. Credence Clearwater Revival's

"Proud Mary" and Steppenwolf's "Born to be Wild" were band favorites. During his junior year in high school, he left the band to focus on basketball and to prepare for college.

### Life as a Bear and a Razorback

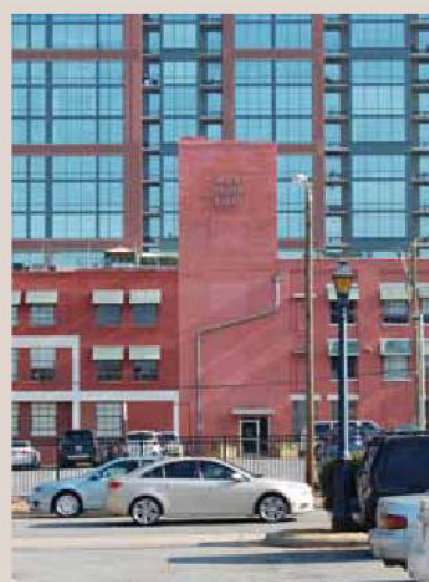
He received a scholarship to the Civil Engineering Department at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. During the summer after high school graduation, Steve married his high school sweetheart, Jan Cromwell. The move to a very urban area of St. Louis proved to be a bit much for the newlyweds. Washington University had no accommodations for married students, so they had to rent an apartment off campus. After one semester, the couple moved to Fayetteville where Steve enrolled in the University of Arkansas. He found the U of A to be a great place to study engineering. The Civil Engineering Department had an amazing group of professors and since many high school counselors had talked students out of studying engineering, the halls were pretty empty and class sizes were very small. Students received a lot of personal attention, sometimes even more than they wanted.

Steve got his first taste of utility life working during the summers of 1973 and 1974 in the Harrison District Office, for Arkansas Power & Light. The office had a new computer system for tracking the district's distribution devices and meters. Steve spent time working to improve the accuracy of the records and submitting work orders to remove equipment no longer needed. He learned to identify types of distribution equipment and conductors, stake a distribution line, operate a bucket truck and how to read and modify AP&L drawings.

In 1976, Steve graduated with High Honors from the University of Arkansas, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering. Eventually he became a Registered Professional Engineer in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas.

### Third Time's a Charm

For a smart guy, it took a while for Steve to figure out that Arkansas was home and always would be. After graduation, Steve took a job at Black and Veatch Engineers in Kansas City, Missouri. Using his newly minted degree, he performed civil and structural design for elements of coal-fired power plants. He also worked on steel



### Rock Street Lofts.

Steve did the structural engineering work for the architect to turn an old furniture warehouse building into a downtown loft apartment complex. The bottom floor contains retail space and the upper floors are loft apartments. This involved reworking portions of the old wood beam and wood floor framing. After cutting out a large section of the original framing in the center of the building to provide an atrium, Steve was able to reuse that material to repair the some of the wood was damaged by water leaking from the roof.

structures for turbine buildings, concrete cooling tower basins, concrete stack foundations, and coal pile drainage systems.

After just a year in Kansas City, he moved back home to Harrison where he took a job heading Engineering and Drafting for Ozark Metal Products. Ozark fabricated materials for metal and spiral stairways, handrails, canopies, and catwalks. The work was not very challenging, so after a short time, he was off again, this time to Riverside Industries in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

As a design engineer for Riverside, Steve worked on the foundation and structures for steel and aluminum electrical transmission towers. Anxious to start a family, he and Jan adopted their daughter



### Stephens Building.

This is a 30 story steel building that has stunning views up and down the Arkansas River from the upper floors. The building houses a bank and many other businesses and offices. Steve did the structural engineering for the building.

Kelley in 1979. By 1980, he was ready to move back to Arkansas. Although he would still search for that perfect job, he was back for good this time.

For the next five years, Steve would leave his mark on Little Rock, first with the Blass Architectural Firm and then with Riddick Engineering. Steve provided civil and structural services on highly visible residential, commercial and industrial projects throughout the area. These include additions to the Baptist Medical Center, the Arkansas Children's Hospital, the Stephens Building, the parking deck at UA Medical Sciences Campus and the Aerospace Museum and IMAX Theater. He also worked on many structures that were a part of electric utility systems. These include high-voltage transmission towers, power plants and other utility facilities.

While Little Rock was growing, Steve's family was as well. Honey was born in 1981 followed by Whitney in 1984.

### Coop Life

He began working at Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC) on January 2, 1986. AECC, created in

1949 and based in Little Rock, provides power for more than 500,000 members of Arkansas' 17 electric distribution cooperatives. His first position with AECC was to be the on-site representative for the construction of AECC's first hydroelectric generating plant on the Arkansas River. The plant, the Clyde T. Ellis Hydroelectric Generating Station, was built at the James W. Trimble Lock and Dam near Fort Smith. This required that the family relocate, so they moved to Van Buren, Arkansas just across the river from Fort Smith. The plant was completed on time, under budget, and without any lawsuits. The dam became operational in late 1988 and in March of 1989, the Sharps moved back to central Arkansas, settling in the community of Maumelle, just outside of Little Rock. Although not the on-site representative, Steve was heavily involved in the construction of the two other AECC low-head, run-of-river hydro-power plants on the Arkansas, the Carl S. Whillock Hydroelectric Generating Station at the Arthur V. Ormond Lock and Dam near Morrilton completed in 1993 and the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas Hydropower Generating Station located at the Wilbur D. Mills Dam near Dumas, completed in 1999.

Steve worked on numerous other repair, renovation, and new construction projects at AECC and Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (AECI) headquarters and at other coop locations around Arkansas. Steve was very involved in the design and construction of the new

AECC/AECI headquarters building and the renovation of the Oswald Buildings at the headquarters.

Steve began and developed AECC's Fuels and Civil Department under the supervision of Louis Fish, Maurice Robinson, and Jonathan Oliver. As Director of Fuels, Steve was responsible for providing an economical and reliable supply of fuel to AECC's generating facilities. He was also responsible for providing civil and structural engineering services on AECC projects ranging from power plants to building additions to substations.

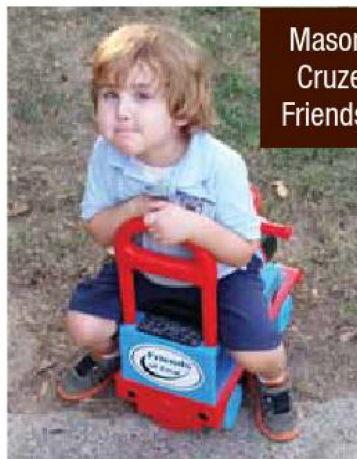
Throughout his career, Steve was very involved in fuel related organizations on a national level. A major focus of his efforts was to foster competition within the transportation system. One of these projects was the 321-mile Cowboy Line which stretched across northern Nebraska. Originally a C&NW line, the UP abandoned it in the 80's. It was then used only for local grain traffic and a portion went to the Rails to Trails program. In the late 90's a group of utilities looked at the feasibility of using the line to establish a shorter route from the PRB to Kansas City. The route would have fewer turns and lower grades. Ups and downs in the economy and concerns about the effect of onerous environmental regulations caused many of the interested utilities to withdraw from the effort. Steve also worked in support of the ETSI Pipeline project. This coal slurry pipeline would have transported coal from the PRB to plants in Kansas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. The railroads



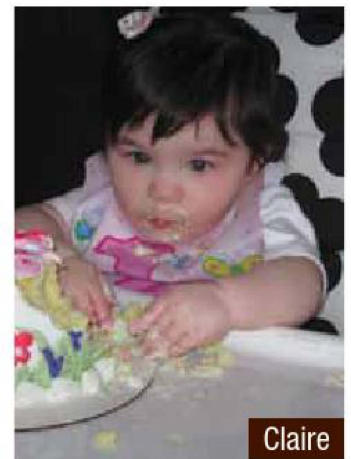
Judy Michaels and Steve Sharp in Napa for the 2006 NCTA Spring Conference



Aubrey



Mason (L) and  
Cruze (R) are  
Friends of Coal



Claire

opposed this pipeline at every turn. The ETSI project was finally abandoned in 1984 because of falling energy prices and increasing concerns about water rights. The railroads were later found guilty of conspiring to stop the pipeline and were ordered to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in penalties. While this helped investors, it did nothing to help create more transportation competition.

Over the years, Steve has provided testimony at many Surface Transportation Board and Congressional hearings. Not one to shy away from a fight, AECC took on the BNSF on the dust mitigation issue following the 2005 double derailments caused by inadequate track maintenance. Steve is often quoted in industry trade press and less frequently in publications such as the Wall Street Journal. For the last years Steve has been serving as the President of the Consumers United for Rail Equity, a rail shipper coalition focusing on rail competition.

In addition to his day job and his national efforts regarding transportation, Steve volunteered his time and expertise to efforts to preparing for and responding to natural disasters of all types, but earthquakes in particular. He served on a number of community groups and advisory councils including the Arkansas Governor's Earthquake Advisory Council and the Arkansas Pre-Disaster Mitigation Advisory Council. He has taught seminars on how to determine how a building will behave during an earthquake and how to evaluate buildings for safety afterwards.

## Family Life and Retirement

While Steve was named the 2001 Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation Employee of the Year, he was apparently

not also husband of the year and Steve and Jan divorced. Later that year, he met Judy Michaels, a pediatrician from nearby Conway, at an ice hockey game in North Little Rock. They began dating and fourteen years later, they are still together. Judy also has three children. Her son Justin lives in Washington State near Seattle. Her daughter Lydia lives in Ashville, North Carolina. Her son Logan, his wife, Jennifer and daughter Aubrey live in Conway. Steve's girls all have kids of their own now and still live in Maumelle.

While they may not be ready to take on the Duggars over in Tontitown in terms of sheer numbers, the combined families are a busy, happy bunch. Kelley's son Mason goes to school down the road and since retiring last July, Steve sometimes has pickup and afterschool care duties. He also occasionally picks his grandson Cruze from school and often babysits when Whitney and her husband Shea are both working on the week-end. It should be no surprise that the toy selection at the Sharp house includes a foot powered ride-on locomotive sporting a Friends of Coal sticker or that a wooden railway is always at the ready for some creative track construction. While there is plenty of "Turtle Power" when Mason and Cruze get together, there is an ample supply of girl power too. Honey and Josh's daughter Claire just turned one and is always a welcome guest when Mom and Dad have things to do. Judy's granddaughter Aubrey gets weekly Grandparent, Inc. service to her dance lessons in Conway.

And then there are the critters of the four legged variety that also make a house a home. As if the grandkids weren't entertainment enough, two rescue dogs Blackie and Ebbie and two cats also demand their fair share of attention. A third dog, Bosco,

a sweet soul suffering from a degenerative muscle disease, recently passed away.

Like most recent retired folks, Steve wonders how he ever found the time to work 40+ hour week. Several of the remodeling projects in the house are finally getting finished with prominent wall space reserved for pieces from Steve and Judy's favorite artist, LeRoy Neiman. Steve remains active with the Arkansas Academy of Civil Engineers at the University of Arkansas where he was elected into membership in 1998 and is now serving as its immediate past president. The Academy recently inducted its 2014 members and Steve helped to spread the good news to inductees.

It seems that the typical retirement activities of golfing and fishing are temporarily on the back burner. Steve is busy and Judy still has her medical practice. The couple does share a love for motorcycles and enjoys getting out for rides on the smaller back roads in the area. Although Steve had ridden in college, it was Judy that ended up getting him back into it about five years ago. "When I started talking about getting a motorcycle, Judy decided to buy a Honda 750 Shadow she spotted for sale by the side of the road." He wasn't until a year later that Steve picked up a 2000 Harley Davidson Road King Classic for himself. They have also managed a few hiking trips, most recently to Mowlt Magazine, the highest point in Arkansas, and to Cedar Creek, taking Aubrey on her very first hike.

These two will keep life interesting for each other. Judy will keep picking things up from the side of the road and from the pound. Steve will find a way to make them work because of all the things that are great to engineer, the best thing to build is a good life. a.