



In Memoriam

Steven G. Whisenant (1950-2022)

Steven G. Whisenant of Ingram, Texas, former Head of the Ecosystem Science and Management Department at Texas A&M University and worldwide authority on ecological restoration and natural resource management, passed away August 31, 2022. Steve was born December 5, 1950 in Plainview, Texas, son of Robert G. and Shirlene Whisenant. Steve dropped out of high school and joined the U.S. Marine Corp. Extensive experience in Viet Nam behind an M60 machine gun in the open door of a Huey helicopter gunship catapulted Steve onto the trajectory for an exceptional life.

After military service, Steve obtained his high school GED and went on to earn a B.S. in Wildlife Management with Honors at Texas Tech University (1975), an M.S. in Biology with a Chemistry minor at Angelo State University (1978) and a Ph.D. in Range Science at Texas A&M University (1982). His career as an educator and researcher began in 1982 in the Department of Botany & Range Science at Brigham Young University. In 1988 he joined the Rangeland Ecology and Management faculty at Texas A&M University, advancing through the ranks of Professor in (1995) and Interim Head (2003) to Department Head in 2004. In 2006 Steve was concomitantly appointed Interim Head of Forest Science and spearheaded the merger of the two departments into Ecosystem Science and Management in 2007.

He served as Head of this unit with 53 faculty and about 400 students until 2012, at which time he switched from this administrative role to international assignments with The Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture, Texas A&M University System. There, with funding from USAID, Steve served as Chief of Party for the John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology (a consortium for development in Bor, South Sudan). In 2013, he served as Regional Director of the Borlaug Institute's Middle East and Africa Division and in 2018 Steve was appointed Chief of Party for the USAID-funded Women's Scholarship Endowment whose mission was to assist women in Afghanistan in obtaining a university education.

Steve authored or co-authored some 50 refereed journal articles and seven book chapters. The capstone of his career was his 1999 Cambridge University Press book "*Repairing Damaged Wildlands: A Process-Oriented, Landscape-Scale Approach*". A Chinese translation of the book was published by Cambridge University Press and China Science Press. Steve's book is in its 7th printing and is the most widely sold and used ecological restoration book in the world. Steve was a pioneer and early innovator in the science of ecological restoration and readily shared his knowledge and experience as a consultant in some 27 foreign countries in the Middle East and Gulf Region, Africa, North America, the Indian subcontinent, Europe, southeast Asia, South America, and China.

Recognition for Steve's contributions included: the Society for Range Management's *Chapline Research Award* and *Outstanding Achievement Award*; the Texas Section SRM *Outstanding Contribution to Range Management* and *Outstanding Publication Awards*; the Aspen Global Change Institute's *Summer Science Fellow*; and the Department of Botany & Range Science, Brigham Young University *Outstanding Service Award*.

Steve's leadership service included: Chair, Association of University Rangeland Resource Programs; Executive Board Member, Texas Forestry Association; Editorial Advisory Board, *Ecological Restoration*; Contributing Editor, *Native Plants Journal*; Associate Editor *Journal of Range Management*; Faculty Advisory Committee, Texas A&M University Press; and Director and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Society for Ecological Restoration International.

Steve is remembered as a loyal friend, always smiling, a servant to others and a wise and caring steward of our rangeland ecosystems. Interment was with full military honors at the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, San Antonio, Texas. Steve is survived by his loving and devoted wife and companion, Judith A. Turlington, of Ingram, Texas; son Justin Whisenant of Kerrville; daughter Laura Gray of Waco; stepson Tyler Turlington of San Antonio; mother Shirlene Juno of San Antonio; 10 grandchildren; sister Francyne Underwood of Garden Ridge; sister Lisa Merxbauer of San Antonio; and brother Kevin L. Whisenant of Plainview, Texas.

The family requests contributions be made to the Brighton Center for Children with Special Needs (14207 Higgins Rd., San Antonio, TX 78217, ph. 210/826-4492).

Rest and fish in peace Steve. Semper Fi.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.