

Sean Howard Atkins, PhD

APRIL 14, 2017



Sean passed away in Regina after a mercifully short illness. His passing will be mourned by his beloved wife Christine Massing and dear son Devin Atkins; parents Allan Atkins (Gail) and Andrea Atkins; brothers Ashley (Sunshine), Brent, and Harrison Atkins; and his in-laws Carole and Duane Massing. Sean was a devoted husband and father and friend to many. He will be deeply missed by his family and friends, and by his former and present students and colleagues at U of A, MacEwan University, and U of R.

Sean spent his growing years in Toronto. He treasured his years attending and working in summer camps where he developed a passion for canoe tripping and hiking. An inveterate historian, he took his BA at McGill, his MA and PhD at U of A, and his BEd at OISE. Sean was a scholar and committed teacher; a man in constant and restless search for meaning in life and for understanding of his place and responsibility to the earth. He loved being in the Rockies and coming to the cabin in Nordegg. He and Christine travelled the globe for many years, teaching and learning about many diverse cultures. He was a voracious reader and avid music fan, especially the Grateful Dead. Sean's sudden passing leaves a space of silence that was so recently filled with lively conversation and colorful commentaries on a wide range of topics. We are very grateful to the physicians and nursing staff at Pasqua Hospital for their highly skilled and

dedicated care of Sean in his final days, and to the many friends and colleagues who have offered so much support.

Celebration of Life will be held on Wednesday, April 19, 2017 at 4:00 pm in Room LI216 La Rotunda, U of R.

Donations may be made in Sean's name to University of Regina Faculty of Education. <http://www.uregina.ca/giving>.

Messages of Condolence

Dear Christine, Devin and family,

I was so sorry to hear about Sean. I have great memories of him growing up. He was a wonderful funny sweet guy and I will always remember him fondly.

— Dara Schwartz

Hi Christine, Devin and family.

So sorry for your loss. It has been a longtime since I have seen Sean but he was a force. I met him in high school and considered him a good friend. He was always friendly, always made me laugh, spoke kindly about others, introduced me and took me to see Stevie Ray Vaughn. He loved his wrestling back then and the odd Belly Buster sub.

I wish you all strength during this very sad time.

— Ross Arbuck

We are so sorry to hear about the loss of our dear cousin Sean. Although we haven't seen him in a long time, I have very fond memories of Sean growing up. Our thoughts are with you at this sad time.

With love,

Beth, Kevin & Cameron

— **Beth (Hanet), Kevin & Cameron**

Christine, Devin, and family, I am so very sorry for your loss. I hadn't seen Sean in quite a while but I'm lucky to have so many happy memories with Sean from all of our public school days and beyond. Please find strength in the fact that Sean touched so many lives in such an amazing way.

— **Craig Mendelson**

Dear family,

Sean was one of the first friends I had in elementary school. He was an amazing person. So much fun to be around. His terrific sense of humour was always appreciated. I am so sorry to hear of his passing. I wish you strength in this difficult time.

— **Susan Nissan**

So sorry to hear about this terrible loss. Although we lost contact, Sean was such a memorable personality and great fun to play with growing up. Everyone on our street knew his laugh and personality. Always inclusive and many many memories of playing at the park together when younger with our brothers. Very very sorry for this tragic loss.

— **Andrew Scholes**

Dear Christine and Devin,

Uncle Steve and I are so very sorry to hear of Sean's sudden passing. This must be a very difficult time for you both.

Though we have not seen you in a very long time our memories of Sean bring smiles to our faces. He was a very special individual and I am sure he will be dearly missed by you all.

Our deepest sympathies.

Uncle Steve and Aunt Myrna

— **Myrna Hanet**

Dear Gail and Butch,

Our hearts go out to you on the sad loss of your beloved son and stepson, Sean. Reading about him and learning about the contribution he made to and the joy which he took in the world only magnifies our understanding of what a wonderful man he was. Please pass on our sympathy to Christine, Devan and your whole family.

— **Virginia and Carl Solomon**

Dear Christine, Devin, and family,

Words cannot express the shock and sadness I felt when I learned that Sean had passed away.

As a former neighbour in Toronto, I have fond memories of him as a lively young boy. My deepest condolences to the Atkins family.

— **Doreen Mendelson**

Dear Butch and Gail,

So sorry to hear of your loss of Sean. Our sincere condolences to both of you. If he was anything like Butch, which it seems he was, it is truly a great loss to this world. Please be in touch with us when you are home. If we can help in any way, please let us know.

Love, Melanie and Martin

— Dr and Mrs Martin Unger

Almost 35 years ago, as a middling peewee hockey player, I walked into our dressing room for our first game and asked to wear the number 2. They said it was already taken. I looked and saw this massive kid smiling, saying, "I always wear 2." I wasn't going to argue with Sean Atkins in my first introduction to this larger-than-life figure. I'd be lying if I said we were close, but we knew each other in hockey, at Camp Timberlane and at York Mills. He was impossible to miss...always laughing, always loud, always funny.

I lost track of him, but received the news today. Sounds like Sean lived a great life, did a lot of things people only dream of doing. All the best to his family.

— Elliotte Friedman

Allan, Gail and Family,

So very sorry to hear of the loss of Sean. Kendra and I are thinking about all of you. Our deepest sympathies.

With love, Kim & Kendra

— Kim Shanley

Dear Christine and Devin,

I am so terribly sorry. Sean was one of the best.

— **Cindy Anderson**

Sean was my colleague in Macewan for a few years and one of my favorite people to run into. I would hear his booming voice in the hallway from afar and immediately smile. He was funny, happy, direct, wonderfully informal and just full of life and joy. I loved eavesdropping on the conversations he had with students while we shared an office because he treated them as equals, and the students were always excited to talk to him. He called my colleague Jackie and I "amigas" because we teach Spanish. I am so sad he won't be around anymore. My deepest condolences to the family.

— **Kate Primorac Finn**

Dear Butch, Gail, Brent and Family. Our thoughts are with you at this most difficult time.

Love from, Dana Kelly, Randy and Lori Pearlstein.

— **Dana Long Kelly**

Dear Butch and Gail, So sorry to hear about your loss. May happy memories help to provide some comfort during this difficult time.

— **Linda Wolfe**

I am so sorry for your loss. Sean was a colleague and friend. I always enjoyed talking with him about teaching history. I learned about new ways to engage students and new types of assignments. But history was often just an excuse to gab because I just enjoyed talking with him. Sean could talk with anyone. He was interested in everything. And he always talked about the things that interested you. With me he talked about history, CFL football and Rocky Mountain hiking. With someone else he talked about critical theory and rock and roll music. He had the most eclectic group of friends. I will miss his laugh and his friendship. All the best.

— **Bob Irwin**

Dear Christine, Devin and Family, I was shocked and saddened to hear about Sean's sudden passing. I will always remember Sean as my brash, younger cousin who loved Q107, the Toronto Argonauts and canoe trips. He always lit up the room when he walked in - everybody knew Sean was there with his smile and zest for life. I extend my deepest condolences on Sean's passing. May his memory be a blessing.

— **Randy Schwartz**

I was so sorry to see the announcement of Sean's passing. He was a wonderful colleague, and I enjoyed having him as an office mate. Our office was filled with his humour, booming voice and laughter as he regaled us with stories about experiences he had during his various postings in Japan, Northern Canada and elsewhere. His enthusiasm and passion for his history courses translated into lively office discussions and explanations of the interesting assignments he had created. The students loved him. [I know this because of their engagement with him in the office and also from comments about him that I overheard from our mutual students.]

At one time Sean was worried about completing the language requirement for his PhD. I lent him some French books, and he delighted in speaking French to me. He was so proud and relieved when he returned the books after completing that requirement.

Sean was devoted to his wife and son, and spoke of them daily while citing experiences from family life.

Although he had moved on to a new life in Saskatchewan, he was never forgotten.

— Renee Bliss

Shock, disbelief and sadness. Sean and I shared an office one term, and he was one of my favourite 'roommates'. You could always hear Sean from a distance, his voice and his laugh, and hearing him made me smile. I enjoyed watching Sean with his students. He treated them with tremendous respect and his enthusiasm was contagious. I was amazed by his passion for reading. And whenever he read something with German context or terminology, he made sure to mention it to me. Sean was a great colleague and is greatly missed. My deepest condolences to his family, most of all to Christine and Devin.

— Daniela Gatto

Dear Atkins family,

I am so terribly sorry for your loss. Sean and I became friends as campers at Camp Timberlane. We became closer in high school. From the day we met, we always had fun together. My memories with Sean are endless. He was always so full of life. He loved people. He would greet you with a big smile, a hello and a hug. If he saw you from 50 feet away, he would yell your name and smile. Whenever you saw him, you felt like he was so happy to see you, even if you had seen him an hour earlier.

As time passed, we spoke less frequently as our lives went on separate journeys. But he will forever be in my thoughts.

Wishing you all comfort at this difficult time and may Sean rest in peace.

— **Josh Cooper**

Dear Brent & Family,

I remember Sean fondly from camp and school. He was a character. I am so sorry for your loss and wish you all good things in the future.

— **Whitney (Scharf) Noble**

I am deeply saddened to hear of the loss of Sean. Sean was once my office-mate at MacEwan University. When he mentioned he had taught English in Japan, I was very excited as I am a Japanese language instructor. He always greeted me in Japanese and often talked about his good memories of Japan. I could picture people surrounded him in Japan, loving him very much. He often talked about his family. He seemed a very proud, caring husband and father. He also talked about how energetic his dentist father is. Sean's laugh was so cheerful, our office brightened up when he was around. When we had a lunch gathering at a Japanese restaurant, he came a little late and, again, he immediately filled the room with a lot of laughter. He will be missed very much.

— Kyoko Ohori

My deepest condolences to you all who loved Sean so dearly.

I will always remember Sean as a smart, caring, boisterous and fun person to be around. He was always concerned with the well being of others even at a very young age. His sense of humor was one of a kind.

Truly, Sean was a person whom everyone liked and respected.

He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

I am so sorry for your loss.

— Paul Gold

I enjoy music, but it was always better to listen to music with Sean because he was always so enthusiastic about it.

I enjoy concerts, but it was always better to go with Sean because he just couldn't sit still. He had to get up and dance.

The same goes for eating good food, drinking good beer, or any number of other things that Sean loved. His enthusiasm was infectious. He was a force of nature.

For the rest of my life, I know I'll be stopping for a moment at a concert or in a brew pub and saying, "Sean would have loved this."

— Doug Bailie and Lisa Watson

My deepest sympathies to Sean's family. A true light taken too early. Sean and I were great friends in Jr. High, High School and into university when I was able to make it to Montreal. If I have to sum up Sean in one word - it would be genuine. He never wavered in his friendship and was always ready for fun. The last time we saw each other was at a concert at Ontario Place. Listening to good music over beers - exactly the way I want to remember him. I feel honored to have known him. He will be remembered and missed.

— Sean Melzack

To the entire Atkins family- I met Sean many years ago at Camp Timberlane. Although, it has been several years since I have seen him, when I think of him, it's always with a smile. My sincere condolences to all of you. Wishing you strength through this difficult time.

— Tracy Krieger Zepp

Christine, Devin, Butch, Gail, Brent, Harrison and Ashley

I met Sean in grade seven at Windfields and we immediately became such close friends. His boisterous fun loving personality immediately drew me to him. Never shy, always chatty he was the center of attention wherever he went which drew people to him like a magnet. Over the year's we continued to get closer as we went to high school, camp, university and beyond. He was one of my best friends in my most formative years and was and is as much a part of me as anything or anybody else. Life was never dull with Sean around you never quite knew what was going to happen. His free spirit made life for all of us such an adventure. He knew who he was at a young age well before most of us knew ourselves and he stayed true to that through his life. He was simply genuine, lovable and not to mention funny. I'll never forget our times together listening to music, watching the games, canoe tripping, going to jazz clubs and of course who can forget our first Dead show at Kingswood. What a ride. As we got older and Sean moved away to pursue his dreams we lost touch but whenever we crossed paths through the years, it was as if I saw him the day before and just like old times. For seven year's he was a brother to me and when I heard the news of his passing I knew I had not just lost a friend but also a part of me. Christine, Devin, Butch, Gail, Brent and Ashley, I'm cannot be there in person on Sunday, but I hope you can find some comfort in those that mourn with you and strength carry on with his memory in our hearts. God Bless.

— **Stephen Bloomberg**

We are so sorry to hear of the passing of Sean. As far as I know, we probably only met him at the 'Massing reunion' that we, the Paulson family hosted. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Christine and Devin, at this very sad time.

Sympathy from Arnold and Evelyn

— **Arnold and Evelyn Leimert**

Ken and I are very sorry for your loss. I remember Sean as a very enthusiastic and interesting man when we met at the last Massing reunion. May happy memories console you at this trying time.

— **Meryl Ellsworth**

Dear Christine, Devin and Family. Our thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time. Any time I think of Sean it brings a big smile to my face. I think back to my first day at Dunlace PS in Grade 4. New to Canada and entering a new school few people made me feel so welcome as Sean did. Never worried about what you looked like, what clothes you wore or in my case what language you spoke...he always had a special way of providing comfort and friendship to all. Unfortunately our paths did not cross more often in recent times, I will miss my friend and cherish all the great times we spent together. Rest in peace big guy.

— **Jorge Backal**

The news came as a shock. There is no word that can ease the pain of your family. My heart goes out to your wife, your children and all your family members. May God help them through this difficult time!

— **Souleymane FOFANA**

Dear Butch and Gail, we are so sorry for the loss of your beloved son. may you have comfort in the many happy memories.

— **Murray and Sondra Waldman**

I have just learned of Dr. Atkins passing. I am devastated. I had the privilege of having Sean as a professor and experienced his energy and passion. Dr. Atkins was an amazing man who was well loved by so many of us at Macewan University. I missed him greatly when the family moved to Saskatchewan, and now with his passing I miss him even more. I cannot express how heartbroken I am for his family. I hope it offers you some comfort that your husband, son and father will be mourned by everyone who had a chance to know him.

— **Darin Rousselle**

Sorry about the loss of your loved one whose life ended way to soon. Our sincere and heartfelt condolences, blessings to all

— **Howard and Gaylene**

Incredible memories rooming with Sean at McGill. Living and being close friends with Sean created a profound impact in my life and personality. Joanna and I send our deepest condolences to Sean's family

— **PAUL PEARL**

Dear Butch, Gail, Ashley Brent & Harrison: No one wants to get news of such a young life taken much too early, but it is not "How did he die", but "How did he live" Not, "What did he gain, but "What did he give". We remember Sean as gregarious, loving, and a thoughtful young man who always brought laughter, and lots of life to everyone around him. Siggy & I wish you much strength.

— **Linda & Siggy Soudack**

Sean Atkins and I were very close Friends during grade 7-9 at Windfields junior High School. On grade 9 grade night Sean and I shared a limousine together with our dates Susan Talsky and Leslie Wuls. It is a very special memory I will always cherish.

Sean had an energy and a spirit like I've never seen before.

Sean always encouraged me to be my best. I am very thankful and grateful for my friendship and the memories I have of Sean.

I wish Andrea and Sean's family great strength during this difficult time.

Sean was a powerful person both physically and mentally. I'm so sad he is gone I am honoured to celebrate his life with his friends and family.

Everyone knows how large his heart was. He genuinely cared for others and always wished for others to succeed.

I kept a note Sean wrote insisting I keep on running and go after my dream. I listened to him and thanks to him I qualified for the Boston Marathon.

Memories of spending time with Sean on Beavehall dr (family home) are truly special and will never be forgotten.

I will miss this kind soul greatly.

— Don Campbell

We are so sorry to hear of Sean's passing. What a tragic loss for all of you and want you to know our thoughts, prayers and love are with you.

— **Richard and Elizabeth**



<https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/atkins-phd-sean-howard>

Printed on July 12, 2026