

# ALLEN & SHARI EWING

Members since 1980

## Allen Ewing

**Birth Date:**

March 15, 1946

**Place of Birth:**

Chambersburg, PA

## Shari Ewing

**Birth Date:**

June 24, 1947

**Place of Birth:**

Windber, PA



## Did You Know?

Allen originally dreamed about becoming a naturalist and working for National Geographic.

Shari's dad raised Polled Hereford cattle, and she grew up preferring to work out in the barn than in the house. One year Shari raised a steer that won 4H Grand Champion.

## Favorite Hymns:

There's Something About  
That Name

Be Thou My Vision

Allen grew up as an only child in a small town near Mercersburg, PA, called Marks. With only an 8th grade education, Allen's dad had to work very hard all of his life. And as Allen got older, he joined in with his dad, working on farms and in orchards, helping with road and bridge construction, and pumping gas.

Shari was born prematurely, at only 7 months gestation. Having already lost two daughters shortly after their early births, Shari's mother was convinced that she was going to lose another. But the nurse attending the two of them was a family friend, and she continually reassured Shari's mom, "Now, Fern, this baby is going to make it. Just look at her." After a three-month-stay in the hospital, Shari was finally able to go home. Eventually, the family would grow to include two more daughters. Shari's parents ran a medical practice; her dad as a country doctor, her mom as his assisting nurse. They treated patients in a medical office attached to their home. Shari remembers it feeling like a magical place and finding any reason she could to spend time there. She would sneak into the waiting room through a door in the foyer, a habit her parents very much frowned upon. There she would visit with the patients and watch her parents doing medicine. At the time almost everything was done on site. There was a tiny room where her dad stored medicines that he dispensed directly to the patients, along with hand-written instructions about their use. And there were splints and plaster of Paris in the exam room, so that her dad could set broken bones. Shari remembers accompanying her dad on house calls. Once he took her along to the home of a woman who turned out to be in labor. When Shari's dad realized what was happening, he told her to stay outside and play with the animals until he was finished. When she was six-years-old, Shari's family moved to a farm in Pleasantville. She lived there until she and Allen were married.

Allen and Shari met at Juniata College, where they were both enrolled in the pre-Med program. Allen soon noticed Shari and sought information about her from his friend, Bill, who happened to be from Shari's hometown. Allen telephoned and asked Shari out to a movie, and although she had no idea who Allen was, she accepted his invitation because he dropped Bill's name. They went to see Sound of Music at the movie theatre in Huntingdon, which was the beginning of a several-year-long courtship, in which they remember spending a lot of time walking. Without a car, it was the only way they were able to go anywhere together.

After graduating from Juniata, Allen entered dental school at the University of Pittsburgh. Shari graduated a year later. She then took teacher certification classes over the summer, did student teaching at Mt. Union in the fall, and began graduate work in biology at the University of Pittsburgh in the spring. Shari and Allen got married when Allen was halfway through dental school. Shari took a position teaching high school biology in Bethel Park School District, while Allen worked part-time in a virology lab. Soon their first child was on the way, and Shari needed to resign from her teaching job. Allen took on an extra part-time job as a night-time custodian in an elementary school in order to make ends meet until he graduated from the dentistry program. He then worked for a year in a dental practice in Altoona, before moving the family to Chambersburg in order to start up his own dental practice there. Allen and Shari say it was a leap of faith, uprooting the family and starting a practice from scratch, while continuing to juggle student loan debt. For the first year, the practice consisted of only the two of them; Allen as dentist and Shari as his receptionist and chair-side assistant. They remember these being lean but wonderful times in their lives. And Allen says, "I felt like I could step out in faith, knowing the good Lord had guided me up until that point in my life."

Shari grew up attending New Paris Methodist Church and has fond memories of her childhood Sunday class. She also treasures the memory of her mother kneeling with her beside the bed each night to say prayers. While Allen's family didn't attend church when he was younger, he sometimes went along with his neighbors, and he remembers feeling God's presence in his life when he was out in nature, walking through the meadows and along the creeks. When Allen was older, his family started attending St. Thomas Methodist Church, the same church that he and Shari would join when they moved to the area. Here Shari remembers experiencing a major turning point in her faith when the pastor, Rev. Charles Tolbert, came to visit them. They were standing together in a circle praying, and she felt like something began to awaken in her. She says, "My eyes began to open to God." Within a couple of years, Allen and Shari transferred to First United Methodist Church which was closer to their home, and here Rev. Tom Webb became a big influence on Allen's faith journey. Allen says, "Tom Webb was spiritual, knowledgeable, insightful, and kind, and yet he was a real person. He was someone I could relate to, because we had both grown up without privilege. I looked up to him an awful lot." It was Tom Webb who encouraged Allen to pursue training as a spiritual director, where Allen said he had the opportunity to dig deeply into spirituality and learn a lot about himself in the process.

Allen and Shari have served the church in many ways over the years. Allen has been called to serve on various administrative boards and building committees, in addition to volunteering as a youth counselor and attending work camps. Shari has helped with VBS, taught the CHUMMS Class, directed Junior Choir, accompanied and later directed the 3M Choir, filled in as a substitute organist, and currently serves as a Stephens Minister. And Shari and Allen have both been long-term members of the Chancel Choir.

Allen recounts a pivotal spiritual experience that occurred in his life. In 2000, he contracted staph a septicemia. The infection settled along his spine, forcing him to spend the better part of a month between Chambersburg Hospital and later Johns Hopkins. The doctors at Johns Hopkins told Allen that his condition was going to require major surgery and that there was a good chance it would paralyze him from the neck down. Allen remembers thinking "Why me?" and feeling totally abandoned by God. He said the pain became so bad and the days so dark that he got to a place where he could no longer even pray. But then one day, the head neurosurgeon reported astounding news: inexplicably, without any surgery, the infection was improving on its own. Allen is convinced it was the prayers of God's people that saved him.

Now, Allen says his new challenge is adjusting to retirement and finding his purpose in this new stage of life. He appreciates the change in perspective that it has given him: "Now I realize what is important in life. It's not money or prestige, but rather family and friendships." Allen and Shari say their happiest moments are when they are able to spend time with their daughters, Stephanie and Joelle, and their families. Allen and Shari's advice to them and the rest of us: "Know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and walk with Him all the days of your life."