



Bernard Jack Gebhardt

March 13, 1946 - March 26, 2024

Bernard (Bear) Jack Gebhardt, 78, passed away March 26, 2024, at home in Fort Collins, Colorado, surrounded by his close family and loved ones. Bear was the middle son of Aneita and Bernard Gebhardt, who raised their three boys in the heart of Denver, Colorado. Both brothers, Robert and James, survive him as does his wife Suzanne, his son, Sam, daughter Annalee Moyers and 2 grandsons, Sten Moyers and Michael Gebhardt.

Bear's grandparents raised 8 children on a farm near Wellington, Colorado. He grew up with many aunts and uncles which brought together dozens of cousins on a regular basis throughout his childhood. He stayed in close touch with this large family for his entire life, often being the patriarch that helped to keep the family reunion tradition ongoing for decades.

Bear spent four years at Colorado State University and two years at Colorado University, Boulder. While an undergraduate at CSU he studied English literature and journalism and contributed to the university newspaper while editing a weekly literary magazine affiliated with the CSU Collegian. It was while he was at the Collegian that he met his wife and life-long close-knit group of friends. Many of these friends he was still seeing or speaking with on a regular basis days before he passed.

It was also while Bear was at the Collegian during the tumultuous 1960's that

he turned toward social activism, becoming anchored in non-violent advocacy and working fervently toward peaceful conflict resolution, often campaigning for social and political change.

Because of his deep commitment to non-violence, Bear refused induction into the military during the Vietnam War and was consequently sentenced to two years of alternate service. To fulfill his obligation he founded The Point, a pioneering counseling center in Fort Collins that provided crucial support to those grappling with substance abuse, poverty and lack of services. The Point offered free medical services, psychological assistance and legal aid to its clients. Later the Fort Collins Food Co-op (still standing today) got its start through this same organization. Bear's passion for peace (both internally and externally) continued for the rest of his life, being the drive that filled his life with meaning.

He would often joke about his seven-year attention span when it came to careers. As a young man he would help with the harvest on his uncle's farm near Wellington. Later he counseled inmates at the Larimer County Detention Center, taught English at Colorado University, counseled and taught classes for smokers at the Northern Larimer County Health District, and was even a stockbroker for a short time. As he became more familiar with the business world, he opened his own business enjoying the hands-on opportunity to see a blue-collar, nose-to-the-grindstone business develop. But throughout his many careers, Bear remained a prolific writer. He published newsletters, wrote articles for professional magazines, poetry reviews, trade magazines and newspapers, including the Christian Science Monitor and the Fort Collins Coloradoan, where he had a weekly column. He published a variety of books over the years and never lost his enthusiasm for reading and writing, often setting aside time in the early morning before work to crank out another story or article.

Bear was a seeker and a mystic. He spent his free time reading and studying notable scholars from many time periods and from all over the world. He was always interested in philosophizing with his many friends and acquaintances and truly enjoyed nothing more than contemplating the meaning of life with anyone who would like to engage. If you perused his extensive collection of books, you'd find thousands from all the historic and contemporary sages throughout time. Whether your interest was Buddhism, Hinduism, mystical Christianity or Judaism or many other well-known or obscure ideas, Bear could meet you there and have an engaging conversation about it. On any given day you would find Bear in his favorite chair surrounded by piles of books happily absorbing his latest find.

His friends and family meant a great deal to him, and he stayed in close touch with cousins, his brothers and their families and his dear friends here and abroad. He was active for many years in a much-loved men's book club, a Sunday morning discussion group, a Friday morning coffee clique, a monthly scrabble get-together, a pickleball team and with many college friends, feeling a deeply loving companionship with so many. He was dearly loved by his family and friends and will be greatly missed.

Please join us for a memorial service on Friday, November 15th at 3:00 pm at Bohlander Funeral Chapel. 121 W Olive St, Fort Collins, CO 80524. In lieu of flowers consider making a donation to one of Bear's favorite charities: Doctors Without Borders, Southern Poverty Law Center, Foodbank for Larimer County.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

NOV **15**. 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (MT)

Bohlender Funeral Chapel
121 W. Olive Street
Fort Collins, CO 80524

Tribute Wall



“ *Bohlender Funeral Chapel created a Webcast in memory of Bernard Jack Gebhardt*



Bohlender Funeral Chapel - November 15, 2024 at 07:24 PM

AM

I think the entire webcast should be up later. Please check back.

Annalee Moyers - November 16, 2024 at 02:27 PM

AM

Looks like it's missing the first 15 minutes.

Annalee Moyers - November 19, 2024 at 05:54 PM

AM

Here is the speech I gave that was cut off: Thanks everyone for coming! I'm so happy to see that this many people got the message we were finally holding this memorial. It's been a long time coming.

Okay. Here we go. I have a letter to my dad.

Dear Dad,

I'll stop right there...I'm lucky to have gotten to call him dad because that was easy. I have no idea what name I would use otherwise. He had so many! He was named Bernard after his father (who pronounced it Bernard.) So his family all called him by his middle name, Jack. Or they called him "Jackie" So his brothers and millions of aunts, uncles and cousins all called him Jackie. When he went off to school everyone called him Bernie. So he was Bernie from grade school through college. So the millions of friends from his college days (also people I consider aunts and uncles), including my mom, knew his as Bernie. That's the name I remember strongest from my childhood. When he started publishing his books and articles he took the pen name Bear. Bear is a common nickname of Bernard. So he began introducing himself at that time, early 80s? as Bear. Then....in the late 80s he decided to open a furniture business and felt like he needed a good working man's name...so he went back to using Jack and introduced himself as Jack for at least a few decades. That was the name my husband knew him by when he and I met 25 years ago. Finally, in the last couple decades he went back to Bear. So from whichever era you knew him ...know we're all talking about the same guy. Having many names fit his personality so well. He loved to re-invent himself.

Okay, let's do this again.

Dear Dad,

I know you're here. You told me you would be. We sure had a lot in common, didn't we? We were both so darn stubborn, we really could butt heads...digging in our heels on our viewpoint...especially when I was a teenager. I know it wasn't easy to deal with me. It certainly wasn't easy to deal with you either. But that was SO good for us, wasn't it? We both grew so much due to this father/daughter relationship we had. One thing that I'll be forever grateful for, is that we shared a "seeking" nature. You, long before me, were fascinated by the bigger picture, about the nature of reality, what's the purpose of this lifetime, what's next, what was before this lifetime? When I was 19 and I had a very profound spiritual experience you were the person I could talk in depth about it with. That's the point when I began to delve into the millions of books I found around me, thanks to you. Ancient to contemporary teachers...Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, "New Age", earth

centered I couldn't get enough and I'm so grateful that you gave me such access to all this. We talked meditation and chakras and past lives and current life purpose. For over 30 years we never, ever ever got tired of these topics...sharing books and tapes (you know, back in those days) and later videos and podcasts. Even in these topics we would disagree and bicker and push. But oh man, wasn't that great?

Because we were in this search together, studying for decades, we often talked about how you and I shared a language. A language that very few other people shared...sure we talked about these topics with others and even taught these things...but it was you and I who could jump from Christian terminology to Buddhist to metaphysical all within a paragraph, within a sentence...and the other could understand us, could follow along...could get the meaning. Because we had this shared language, we could go really deep. When there wasn't a word for it in English there might be in Sanskrit...when the teachings of Richard Rohr and Ramana Maharshi were both needed get our point across. When a Buddhist koan was needed to get the gist of an ordinary experience. To understand that the holy spirit and shakti were pointing at same thing. Dad, wasn't that fun? That's the piece I miss so much. That language we shared was truly, truly a blessing.

Annalee Moyers - November 26, 2024 at 05:08 PM

AM

When the pandemic hit this part of our relationship sustained us. We began walking and talking each day. You in Fort Collins, me in Portland. We talked and talked. I feel like our relationship really grew during this period. Somehow, what was a close relationship became even closer. It was around this time that both of us felt we were less and less interested in “teachers” and in being taught. We only wanted to read and listen to people with direct experiences. We didn’t even want to hear about what those people had to teach us...we just wanted to hear their stories. Even though we’d both been fascinated by near death experiences for our lifetime this is when it became the main topic of conversation. People who have died, crossed over and come back to talk about it. There are millions of people who have this experience...Hindus who see Jesus, Christians who see a little blue man... Vishnu? And many, many atheists who are just shocked that consciousness continues (didn’t Einstein teach us that energy cannot be created or destroyed, it only can change form?) We were determined to read or listen to every single one. Only sharing the best of the best with each other. It became a source of pride to find a really, really good near-death experience to share with the other. And what they all had in common is a simple but profound experience of Unconditional Love. Infinite Harmony, Infinite Grace. Infinite Peace. These people from all backgrounds, races, genders, socio-economic status come back to tell us that LOVE is what matters. Love is the key. Love is all there truly is. Hard to remember that in this volatile political climate, but oh so good to practice right now when we really need it. Love. That’s what you taught to me, what you taught to others. Love is the answer to all the questions we were seeking. I expect back soon, in whatever way you can to tell me all about it.

I have so much more I’d like to say, so much more I could talk about, but this felt like the most important thing for today. Thank you, Dad, what a blessing you gave me this lifetime. I hope you’re already planning what we’re going to do next. I’m a lucky, lucky girl.

Love, your daughter, Annie.

I have one more thing I want to mention before I pass the mic. My father’s father was adopted and so until there were DNA tests my uncles and cousins, and I didn’t know what our background was... we DID know, that despite the last name, Gebhardt we didn’t have any German in us. Well, it turns out we’re ethnically Jewish. Like a lot. I’m over 30% so I must guess my grandfather was close to 100%. With all the studying of faiths and religions one area where my dad hadn’t studied much was Judaism. But in the last months of his life, he decided he wanted to know more about it and with that he started the Friday night, Jewish practice of Shabbat. He absolutely in no way did this in a very traditional Jewish way. But on Friday nights during those

last months, we would light the Shabbat candles. Say some prayers (very much NOT in Hebrew.) Have some bread, drink some wine and enjoy dinner together. He LOVED this...once he started doing Shabbot he never wanted to miss a Friday. I imagine if he'd lived another 20 years we'd have learned a lot more and maybe added some other Jewish traditions. But I wanted to mention this because here we are on Friday evening...I know the sun isn't going down yet but I'm going to light the Shabbot candles and here's a little excerpt from our Shabbat prayers:

While lighting: Blessed is the oneness that reveals to us the light.

*May you always be Safe,
May you shine the light to the world
And may you feel truly at Peace.*

Dad, this is for you. It's a full moon, it's Shabbot. Shabbot Shalom.

Annalee Moyers - November 26, 2024 at 05:09 PM

AM

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Annalee Moyers - November 26, 2024 at 05:40 PM

RL

“ *It was a joy to know Bear Gebhardt through a men's book club we both were in. It was always a treat to learn his reactions to our books as he had many great insights to share. He also served us to schedule and keep the group going. He is greatly missed. As long as we meet as a group, Bear will be part of us!*

Ross Loomis

Ross J. Loomis - November 15, 2024 at 02:13 PM



“ Of all the people who banded together to stop the war in Vietnam and save more young men from dying, Jack put his future at stake by refusing to serve when he was drafted. Fortunately, he did not spend five years in Fort Leavenworth for refusing. He did spend two years on probation for his stance. I have admired him since and will always. I am very sorry to hear of his passing. I hope Susie and his children and grandchildren are doing well.

Roger Bradbury

Roger Bradbury - November 15, 2024 at 01:06 PM



“ Jack was always so kind. I don't ever think he said a negative thing about anybody. Always had a positive word. I miss him just knowing he is not across town. So thankful for the good times together.

Special memories. Janice

janice lind - November 14, 2024 at 05:57 PM



“ I first met Bear (who we then called Bernie) when I was finishing my medical training in 1972 and had returned to my undergrad Alma mater in the Fort. He was kind, funny and curious . His vision for the clinic at the Point was very practical and really appealed to me, caught up in those times of hope for an inclusive world where everyone had health care and human rights. That clinic at the Point was

really a highlight of my life and informed the rest of my following 40 years of medical service. I'm very grateful to Bear and the other visionaries of those years. Bless you Bear and I know your spirit will continue to ignite hope in darkness.

Dana Slauson MD

Dana Slauson - November 14, 2024 at 03:22 PM

RE

“ *Such joy-full wisdom!
With inner peace for us all.
Bless you, dear sweet Bear!*

Robert Evans - November 14, 2024 at 02:15 PM

LL

“ *Getting to know Bear when I first moved to Fort Collins helped me ease into the life. We drifted apart as Patti and I moved around. Lately though we connected again and Bear and Suzy's friendship became a touchstone. We miss him. Patti and I send our deep and sincere condolences to Suzy, Sam, and Annalee.*

Lloyd Levy - November 14, 2024 at 12:01 AM



“ *I don't think I've ever known anyone who was so consistently true to his personal values of peace and acceptance than Bear Gebhardt. He was and is a gentle spirit in a world where Type A personalities are looked up to and the peacemakers are barely tolerated. There is a real strength in the gentle resolve that Bear kept while living out his life with humor, grace, and generosity. I'm going to miss those coffees and conversations Bear.*

Liam Rooney - November 13, 2024 at 12:44 PM

JN

“ *Early days in old Aurora (early 50's) with Bernie (Bear) , Jimmy (James) with my older brother Glenn(Butch) & myself Jerry. Bernie & Glenn were quite mischievous through Jr. High & followed different paths through life. Fortunately, they were able to get together in Denver a few years ago to reminisce of the good old days! RIP Bear!*



Jerry Nery - November 11, 2024 at 08:27 PM

AA

“ *I loved all of the book discussions we had with the BNO club and the more philosophical Sunday discussions. He provided invaluable suggestions and insights for my latest book too. He was an insightful and charming man with a great sense of humor and irony. He will be sorely missed, truly irreplaceable.*

alan apt - November 11, 2024 at 01:30 PM

G(

“ *My childhood first buddy from Newark St. RIP, Bernie. Glenn*

Gerard B. "Butch" Nery Jr. (Glenn) - November 10, 2024 at 10:10 PM

ST

“ Jack was a wonderful cousin. What stands out first for me was the many Mair Reunions he and Suzy hosted in their home. I am trying to post the most recent reunion of 2022. We laughed and played games and ate fabulous food.
He wrote a book which he allowed me to take my time reading, and I did. Little bits now and then. I replied to his writings with my own..It was great. "Practicing the Presence of Peace" Great book.
Miss you Cousin
Stephanie

Stephanie - November 04, 2024 at 04:43 PM

NJ

“ After Muriel's memorial service Bear, my father (Leif), my wife (Beckey) and I walked up the hills behind the Loopstra House in El Sobrante. I've always loved those hills and I'm really glad to have the memory of walking them with Bear, even if it was only one time with him. He was a very kind man and I'm grateful to have known him.
Nels Jorgenson

NELS K JORGENSON - November 03, 2024 at 02:43 PM

AM

“ 35 files added to the album *Bernie, Bear, Jack, Jacki, Dad, Pop, Grandpa*



Annalee Moyers - November 02, 2024 at 05:48 PM