



William Ernfred Berg

January 16, 1965 - December 15, 2019

There is a beat in some music that vibrates through your body, engulfs your heart and fills your head. There is richness from a meal stirred with love that nourishes your soul. There is a kindness in a few humans that is felt deep within before you even know their name. William Ernfred Berg was that beat. He was that richness. He was that kindness. And forever more we will all yearn to feel those feelings again in exactly the way that we felt them from him.

William died suddenly from a heart attack doing the work he loved with people he adored. It is all unimaginable really but the fact that his heart was so full of lived experiences and so full of a vast network of people perhaps only meant that it was time for him to explore another place—after all standing in one place was just not his style. In all of our sadness and grief we feel almost certain that he is already on another grand adventure that he will one day share with his beloved wife Katherine (Katie), his boys Quinnlan, Remy, and Soren and his dear family including: mother, Elizabeth Vinka Berg, father Robert Kenneth Berg (posthumous), brothers Rick Berg and Anthony Edward (posthumous), sister Mary Berg Sutton (Harold), in-laws Debra Zilavy, Rory LaGrotta, Dennis and Lorry Zilavy, and brothers and sister-in-law Ed, Chris, and Jenny.

Maybe you only met William once, or maybe you knew him for a lifetime. Maybe you knew him as a child of a Navy Commander, or you knew him as Bill from his own Navy service as a chef on the USS Cavalla SSN 684, a fast attack submarine based out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Or you knew him as an Executive Chef and General Manager at the Union Hotel in Benicia, CA. Or as a French antiques dealer and entrepreneur (William's Antiks/Will & Atlas). Or maybe you are a Surly Burner who rode with him on The Bird or connected on the Playa. Or maybe he did you a favor and fixed something or carried something or asked you to lift something. No matter how you met, you knew you just met someone exceptional. In fact, to know William wasn't just an opportunity to know him, it was the gift he gave of knowing you. Indeed, knowing William was the opportunity we all crave yet so often dismiss- the chance to receive a sense of belonging, of feeling loved, or somehow being important. William reflected often that "we connect with others and that gives us what we need." William lived his last days the way he lived most of his days by connecting and talking with more than seventy people on his cell phone as he drove from

his home to LA. These conversations were not just a cursory “hello” but full hearted explorations where he told stories of his life and let us live through them. Lucky us he wanted to know our stories and laugh and cry with us. He wanted to know something personal about everyone he ever met. Even better, he would remember those things and build upon them to create a deep and amazing root system for friendship to thrive. In fact, knowing him made us know ourselves better and to feel love in the deepest of ways. This was his gift to each of us that knew him.

William loved all things French, noting once that his ability to speak the language was “one of his only superpowers.” His zeal was sealed forever when he moved to France in 1997. As a connoisseur of the intersection of beautiful and practical, William and Katie built a wonderful career as French antiques purveyors through William’s Antiks and built their latest business adventure, Will & Atlas, an importer of Fairtrade housewares.

To know this maven, this beacon, this gentle human was to understand that there were teachable moments within grasp if you wanted them. To know William was to know a man who was deeply in service to his family, his communities, and to his country. His unbridled passion for friends, burners, neighbors, British classic cars, music, politics and cultural experiences was immense, but not greater than his dedication and devotion to his family as a husband, dad, son, uncle, cousin, and family member. You could practically taste how much he loved them with each word and act of service. He was truly proud of his boys and his nieces and nephews (Ben, Sam, Katie, Evelyn, Dylan, Addison, Brooke, Makenzie, Benjamin).

You will be missed William but your light shines through every person that you connected with along the way. Know that what we see now, in this unexpected stillness, is that all your movement and all of your spinning was really just you weaving a net that could hold what you loved the most and within it all the grief, memories, joy, and all the precious things. Thanks to William we are all in this net – your conversations, your shared experiences, your laughter, and your tears -- he made sure of it.

In lieu of flowers the family invites you to give a gift of unexpected kindness, to tell a corny joke, to play a favorite song, or appreciate a friend by listening and learning for what they have to share. You may also make a donation to the Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area. (www.dsconnection.org)

A celebration of this very amazing life will be held later in 2020. More details to come.

Comments



“ William, when I first met you (as an adult) you told me you used to go by Bill, but that things had changed in your life and you-William had a conversation with Bill to get it all straight. I was confused, you didn't seem to have a split personality. But I think I met you at a time when you were dealing with change. I remember you telling me that your marriage had ended. That you weren't sure about dating, but that there was this girl.... seems like you couldn't get her out of your mind. :) I remember you gently correcting my french, super annoying but I couldn't deny your prowess with the language and was oh so jealous of the life I wasn't brave enough to pursue. I'll remember the random calls, passing through town. You were always welcome, like you were at the many homes of the many dear friends you have. I will cherish the brief adventures every time you came through town. Glad you and my hubby got to meet on more than one occasion. I think you gave him a thumb's up, he liked you and never complained that we were having a surprise house guest. I remember you bringing baby Quinn to our house with Katie when he was just a little guy. He has the same joy that you exhibited. Know they will all be loved and protected. I'll miss the conversations about our Dads and our beloved Moms. I think you are together with your Dad and my Mom, who were drinking a cocktail and sharing laughs when you showed up. We're all missing you immensely dear friend. Be well.
Laura

Laura Romano - December 28, 2019 at 04:44 PM



“ One of my favorite moments was driving Him back home after he broke his leg at burning man. About 20 miles from his home exit, a rear tire on his dually van popped and he demanded we stop immediately. So, In the middle of the night on the 680. He and I got out of the van, put a blanket on the grass, unpacked some random camping gear to make the best of the situation and chatted about life until the tow truck driver came. I remember He kept trying to apologize for what he saw in others as if it was his responsibility to salve everything he saw wrong with the world. When we got to his home, he showed me he lived in a wonderland he built for himself and his family, A place as unique and intimate as the man himself.

I feel lucky to have known William and I celebrate that bold intimacy he always brought with him everywhere his travels took him.

Raw-be Weezen-berg - December 27, 2019 at 11:28 AM



“ Wonderful, engaged, hands on father and husband who brought ingenuity and love to each interaction. Lucky to know him and his beautiful family.

J. Chadly - December 27, 2019 at 01:19 AM



“ William’s sunshine will last forever. One of the most altruistic person I ever met. That smile, he will be truly missed by everyone. Sending Love to his family.

Pamela Fritz Interieur Perdu SF - December 25, 2019 at 03:46 PM



“ Bill Berg was a student of my husband Mike at Cheshire High School. Either in accounting or typing. We can't remember. Bill was stationed at Pearl Harbor and Mike and I chaperoned the Cheshire High Seniors to Hawaii. One year his mom Vinca called us and asked if we would bring Bill a small package and we said of course we would. Well, Bill met us at the hotel in Oahu and we quickly invited him out to dinner with us. All the high school girls went Ga Ga for Bill because he was so handsome. It was such a special evening with one special guy. To his wife Kati and children we send our deepest sympathy. Bill graduated with our son Jay who passed away from cancer two years ago so I'm hoping they meet again in Heaven. Two special sons that God took too soon. Vinca I think of my son every day and the memories he left us and I'm sure you have many of Bill. He was one special friend. May he rest in peace. Love, Fran Bontatibus

Fran and Mike Bontatibus - December 29, 2019 at 03:11 PM