



## Bernhard "Bernie" Wehefritz Witter

May 3, 1936 - June 26, 2024

Bernhard Wehefritz Witter, known to family as “Bernie” or “Bernd,” died after a short illness in Oxford, Maryland on June 26, 2024.

Born Bernhard Andreas Wehefritz in Göttingen, Germany on May 3, 1936, he was the fourth child of Dr. Emil Wehefritz, a professor of gynecology, and Dr. Margarethe Witter Wehefritz, a pediatrician. He lived for short periods in Mainz and Bad Ems but spent the latter half of his youth in the Bavarian town of Fürth just outside Nuremberg.

In 1952, sponsored by his maternal uncle and wife, Mr. Hans C. Witter and Mrs. Ane Kjergaard Witter of Denville, New Jersey, he sailed alone from Hamburg on the M.S. Italia on March 29, docking on April 9 at a midtown Manhattan pier. Possessed of an adventurous and curious spirit, he had decided to leave his family and emigrate after his three older siblings passed on the opportunity. He adopted the “Witter” surname, intending to revert to Wehefritz when he reached majority, but stuck with the more easily-pronounced-in-English maternal family name in the end.

Having arrived with scant knowledge of the local language but equipped with a dictionary, he graduated a year later with the Dover High School Class of 1953 and matriculated at Yale University, where he majored in industrial administration, played varsity soccer, and managed the track and cross-

country teams. During the summers, he enthusiastically worked as a counselor at Camp Dudley on Lake Champlain. Upon graduation in 1957, he went to work with General Electric's management training program at sites in Pittsfield, Massachusetts; Louisville, Kentucky; and upstate New York. During this period, he met his future wife, Elizabeth Janes Smith, then a student at Smith College, who shared his intellectual curiosity and wanderlust. The pair married in Montclair, New Jersey on December 19, 1959. After several years at GE and six months' active service in the U.S. Army Reserves, he enrolled at Harvard Business School, receiving his M.B.A. in 1963 while Liz taught elementary school.

Bernie felt at home wherever he landed, appreciating what each place had to offer. He and Liz lived in and near numerous cities during their life together, including New York City, London, Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia. Along the way, they had two sons: Scott, born in New York City in 1966, and Jon, born in London in 1969. The couple's deep love for the arts, especially classical music, helped them to feel quickly connected to each locale. When asked shortly before his death which was his favorite, he said he could not choose because "each was unique and filled with really wonderful people," before adding "but London was really fabulous." This passion for the world spilled over into a love of travel. He and Liz visited every continent together, making many trips to not-yet popular destinations, with New Zealand's Milford Trek and Antarctica ranking among particular favorites.

Bernie's entrepreneurship, curiosity, and love of adventure informed his work life from the get-go, beginning with his trading with American GIs during the postwar occupation. His currency? Cigarettes smuggled into Germany in Quaker Oats packages sent by his uncle.

His early career was focused on working with large American companies, such as Standard Oil/Esso and International Paper, which were expanding in

Europe during the rebuilding of the continent in the 1950s and 60s. While he was at one point a leading authority on pipelines in Europe, his career highlight was serving as CFO of Commodore Computers. In this role, he criss-crossed Asia, Europe, and the Americas. He reveled in the power of personal computing and the impact that it could have on the world. Bernie's final job before retirement was supervising all of the administrative and managerial functions of a large Philadelphia law firm, Dechert, Price, and Rhoads, as it grew significantly in the 1980s and 90s.

Drawn by a love of sailing, golf, and gardening, Bernie and Liz moved full-time to their weekend home on the Strand in Oxford, Maryland upon retirement. In 2010, they relocated to Davidson, North Carolina in pursuit of warmer winter weather and closer proximity to grandchildren, who, as fate would have it, moved almost immediately to Washington, DC. Liz and Bernie gamely bought an apartment in the city's Watergate complex and split time between there and Davidson until fully consolidating their time and belongings in the nation's capital.

After his wife of almost 60 years died in July 2019, Bernie moved back to Oxford. There he met Suzanne Beauvais Beyda, who shared his love of dogs and horticulture; the pair married on September 10, 2022. He also leaves behind his beloved rescue Shih-tzu, Buddy, one in a long parade of canines faithfully forming part of the Witter family.

He is survived by his elder son, Scott Alexander Witter; daughter-in-law, Karen Stokley Witter; and grandchildren, Andrew Stokley Witter and Nicole Alexandra Witter of Flagler Beach, Florida, as well as by his younger son, Jonathan Whitney Witter; daughter-in-law, Maureen O'Connor Witter; and grandchildren, Mary Elizabeth O'Connor Witter (Mazie), Adelaide Smith O'Connor Witter (Addie), and Jonathan Whitney Witter, Jr. (Jack), all of

Washington, DC.

He is also survived by two siblings, Dr. Christiane Wehefritz of Tennenlohe, Germany and Valentin Wehefritz of Dortmund, Germany, his other brother, Henning Wehefritz, having passed away earlier this year.

His generosity of spirit, open mind, active intellect, twinkling blue eyes, and warm smile will be missed by all who knew him.

A memorial service will be held at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Oxford, Maryland at 11 a.m. on July 19, after which the family will receive visitors in the Parish Hall.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that those wishing to acknowledge Bernie's life please consider contributions to Camp Dudley (<https://www.campdudley.org/givenow/>) or the Talbot Humane Society (<https://www.talbothumane.org/donate>)

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

JUL 19. 11:00 AM (ET)

church of the holy trinity  
502 s Morris Street  
Oxford, Maryland 21654

# Tribute Wall



“ *Bernie was a great friend and a very good golfer. I think of him when Aronimick hosts the PGA tourney in 2026. Rest in peace Bernie my friend. Liz was also a friend of my wife, Lynn, at Wichert reality in Wayne, PA*

*Jerry and Lynn Young*

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**Jerry Young** - May 17, 2025 at 06:30 PM