



Karl Gottesman

August 13, 1933 - April 10, 2013

Karl Gottesman passed away quietly April 10, 2013, at about 4 p.m. at Queen Anne's Hospice in Centreville, MD. His family was with him.

He was born Aug. 13, 1933, in Nutley, NJ, the son of Ethel Sisselman and Herman Otto Gottesman. His father was an immigrant from Austria, his mother the daughter of Russian immigrants. The family lived in northern New Jersey until 1950, when his parents separated and Karl moved to Kew Gardens, Queens, NY, with his mother and four siblings.

Shortly thereafter, Karl dropped out of Forest Hills High School, before his junior year. His older brother Eugene learned of the University of Chicago's program, which let students without high school diplomas enroll if they could pass the entrance exam. Karl passed the exam easily and became a student at one of the centers of the folk music revival that was beginning to pick up momentum.

He joined the U.S. Air Force in 1953, serving a four-year hitch. He was a navigator on air-sea rescue planes, and performed his overseas service in Heidelberg, Germany. There he met and married a German woman, Ilsa, who returned with him to the U.S. when his tour of duty was finished. He finished his undergraduate degree at the State University of New York in Binghamton, then pursued a Ph.D. program in German at the University of Pennsylvania.

He earned a Masters degree and returned to Germany for further study in 1961, and it was there that his first marriage broke up.

He returned to the U.S. and began teaching German at the University of Delaware. He met Barbara Rose Little, of North Carolina, a fellow graduate student at Penn, whom he married in 1963. They had one son, Kevin, and were divorced in 1976.

In 1969, he took a position in the office of continuing education at Trenton State College (later renamed The College of New Jersey), advising returning servicemen and other older students. He eventually rose to assistant to the vice president for Academic Affairs. He served in that position until 1994, when he retired and moved to Chestertown, where he had already bought a house in 1991. He soon made many friends locally, often because of his music.

Karl played guitar regularly in the Ground Round and Perimeter coffeehouse scene in Camden and Trenton, NJ. When he moved to Kent County, he became a regular participant in the bluegrass jams at the Crumpton auctions. He played guitar in numerous groups including Col. Leonard's Irregulars for about 15 years, once a month at the Medical Adult Day Care Center for a dozen years, and every Friday "since forever" with a bluegrass jam group - recently re-named "The Foggy Memory Boys." His family recalled that Karl had bought his first guitar, a Sears Silvertone, for \$10 at age 10. At the time of his death, he had eight acoustic guitars – plus two banjos and a mandolin. He was expert on all of them. Bluegrass was his favorite style, but he also played blues, jazz, folk, and popular music of many eras. When not performing, he could often be found in the audience at the Mainstay in Rock Hall. He wore his red Mainstay T-shirt in hospice.

He had a long-standing love of the State of Maine, where he had several

friends with whom he spent part of every summer. He traveled extensively within the U.S., often with his son, Kevin, or as part of the Elder Hostel program. Karl was a member of the Natural Living Exchange's Last Tuesday Dinner group for over 20 years.

Karl was a voracious reader with an extensive library and a special fondness for mysteries. He never migrated to an e-reader or even the internet, much preferring to hold the books in his hands. He read the New Yorker cover to cover every week then passed it along to friends. Karl loved reading and discussing history and politics. His book collection has been donated to the Friends of Kent County Library.

While not a religious man, he loved giving Christmas presents and would spend hours poring over catalogs - he didn't like malls much - to find just the right gifts, often books or CDs, for all his family and friends.

He will be greatly missed - his humor, his intellect, his love of music, theater, history, politics, books, good food, good Scotch, and especially good conversation. He was a devout Democrat and a proud liberal.

He was predeceased by his parents and by his older brother, Eugene. He is survived by three sisters, Louise Pressman, Joan Brooks, and Marie Pamental; his son, Kevin; his ex-wife Barbara, and several nephews and nieces.

He had been ill for a few months. He took a turn for the worse over the weekend and entered hospice on Monday. Although weak and in some pain, he was still very much himself, selecting books to take with him. Once there, Karl discovered a CD player in his room and asked friends to bring him some Charlie Byrd CDs. He was in a good mood, checking his cell phone messages

Monday evening. He took his pain medicine and went to sleep. The nurse called shortly before noon Tuesday to say that he had gone into a coma. He never regained consciousness.

Several of Karl's musician friends and family members played music or sang for him in shifts throughout the day on Tuesday and Wednesday. He seemed to respond to the music although he never woke. Others sat with him until his son arrived from San Francisco Tuesday evening. Karl died peacefully with no apparent pain about two hours after his last sister arrived.

His son said that no memorial services are currently planned. A concert may be held in his memory later in the spring. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

Cemetery Details

Private

Tribute Wall



“ *Karl Gottesman*

October 26, 2023 at 06:42 PM



“ *Karl was my playing partner at Rutgers-Camden. No one could play the blues like him. He was a natural. I think of him and his family frequently. Miss him every think I pick up my guitar. As the Sons of the Pioneers sang, "So long, Pal, it sure gets lonesome here."*

Pete Curry - February 20, 2023 at 01:40 PM



“ *Karl Gottesman*

January 28, 2023 at 12:44 PM



“ *Karl Gottesman*

January 28, 2023 at 08:03 AM



“ *coming up on a year since your passing.think about you alot,miss you,Bruce*

bruce edgecomb - April 08, 2014 at 01:11 PM

BE

“ Bruce Edgecomb lit a candle in memory of Karl Gottesman



Bruce Edgecomb - April 19, 2013 at 07:36 PM

BE

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Bruce Edgecomb - April 19, 2013 at 07:32 PM

BK

“ Blessed and wonderful journey Karl! A song in tribute: LAU, "Save The Bees"

Braden Klug - April 16, 2013 at 08:41 PM

LH

“ Lew Hofmann lit a candle in memory of Karl Gottesman



Lew Hofmann - April 15, 2013 at 12:44 PM

BR

“ *Bonnie R. lit a candle in memory of Karl
Gottesman*



Bonnie R. - April 13, 2013 at 04:58 PM

JB

“ *Joyce Benton lit a candle in memory of Karl
Gottesman*



Joyce Benton - April 11, 2013 at 03:04 PM