

## Gerald Bernard Murphy

August 22, 1950-January 22, 2021

**70 years and 5 months- Every minute, every moment, mattered.**



Gerald Bernard Murphy, 15-year resident, “gentleman farmer,” and active community member of Conifer, Colorado; only child to Bernard (Bud) and Elsie Murphy (both deceased); survived by wife and companion of 50 years, Sandy Hansen Murphy, daughters Genah Murphy Burditt (46) and Sonja Murphy (38), grandchildren Catcher (15), Briar and Tamsyn Burditt (11), cousins, and countless friends, died peacefully, at home on January 22, from gastric cancer.

Gerry (or Murph), as most knew him, was raised in a modest farming community, Walnut, Iowa. His childhood, and in turn, his life’s aspirations were formed by the context of an agricultural upbringing, the family’s commitment to Catholic Faith, and the era in which he grew up-the 1960s, social unrest, and the Space Race.

As a youth, Gerry, at times considered the possibility of life as a clergyman. Eventually, no doubt in large part due to meeting his life partner in 1969, Gerry left the farming life and spiritual aspirations behind to pursue a more scientific and secular career, receiving undergraduate degrees in Math and Physics, and Masters Degrees in Astrophysics and Electrical Engineering, from Iowa State University and University of Iowa (UofI), respectively. After a short stint as a HS science teacher, Gerry embraced his role in higher education, on the Research and Development side, with a scientific and academic career in aerospace, under the tutelage of the likes of famous Space Scientist, James Van Allen. During his time at the University of Iowa, he worked closely with First Female, American Astronaut and Mission Specialist, Sally Ride, on the maiden use/first application of the shuttles’ robotic arm.

After the family relocated to Southern California in the late 1980’s, Gerry enjoyed a successful career at Cal-Tech University’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory. One of his crowning achievements was his contribution to the ACE (Advanced Composition Explorer) program-predicting solar weather since it launched in 1997.

In 1996, the family again relocated. This time to the front range of Colorado. At that time, Gerry formed his own engineering consulting firm, Design Net Engineering, which rapidly grew from boutique engineering consulting firm (one-off products for quirky customers, like a mechanical ankle patent) to advanced, spacecraft avionics design for large government and DOD projects; and, an Avant Garde (so Avant Garde, it was before it’s time), ride share program which attempted to take advantage of extra room on launch vehicles-he was always working to create access to Space for scientists and underdogs,

getting everyone and anyone closer to space, at a palatable price, is better for all mankind, was to his way of thinking. Ever the energetic and idealistic young teacher right out college, Gerry, throughout his career, was known for taking students and junior engineers under his wing, patiently mentoring them, helping them find opportunities, and maturing their talent.

Throughout his life, Gerry remained committed to being an active member in his church community(is); and, an eager and dedicated, tenor, in many church choirs, over the years. When he and Sandy purchased their dream, mountain property he embraced the agricultural endeavors of his youth.

Together they cultivated 13 acres of meadows, forest, and brooks. Gerry mowed/baled hay for neighbors, and the town of Conifer; all manner of livestock were boarded and raised, from steer, to chickens, horses, and goats. He built 2 barns, renovated and added on to the main house. He refurbished numerous, some would say too many, tractors, usually, Oliver's. He enjoyed carpentry, especially when he could use raw materials from his own land, to create masterpieces. And, he pursued his life-long ambition to ski as many powder days possible. In the last 15 years Gerry became one with the land, community, and the spirit(uality) of mountain living.

Considering his character, it is probably no surprise, that after all his accomplishments are accounted for, Gerry's greatest joys, most prized and memorable moments, were not from his career, accolades, or hobbies, but from time spent with his family and friends. Whether harvesting hops and brewing beers with neighbors; hosting travelers all over the mountain(s) at Winter park; tinkering on tractors and discussing philosophy with Sonja; sitting on a porch (deck, patio, Costa Rican beach...etc.) drinking a margarita and musing over the latest Neil DeGrasse Tyson podcast, and solving the world's problems, with Sandy; building a business with Genah, EyasSat; or taking steam engine rides/playing model trains with his grandkids. Catcher, Briar, and Tamsyn will forever treasure and reflect on being dumped into a pile of snow with his front loader, playing and singing Christmas carols at the piano, hearing stories from his childhood, his homemade pie crust, and "Opa's" yummy "candy carrots," from his bountiful garden. These were the moments that gave Gerry the most pleasure and satisfaction. And, these memories will continue to provide those he left behind a measure of peace.

This spring, Gerry won't have to worry about getting the garden "in on time," whether or not it looks like rain between raking and bailing; it won't matter that, that damned Studebaker will sit on blocks for another season. Gerry won't be able to enjoy that cross-Canadian RR tour he had booked for this coming summer. It is heart-breaking, and downright, unfair. But, Gerry's contributions to this world did not end when he traded his cancer-riddled body for eternal life. His legacy WILL carry on, in his grandchildren, his neighbors, the wayward tourist he rescued from a double-black, the shy, young engineer who just needed a word of encouragement/an opportunity to shine. Gerry's legacy will go on, in you, in all of us.

#### **In Memorial:**

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the Gerald B. Murphy Memorial Fund, which will provide awards and mentorship to students and junior engineers, in perpetuity. Details TBD. Please contact [genah@bluefootengineering](mailto:genah@bluefootengineering), subject: GMB Memorial, for details. And/or donations made to a charity of your choice, in Gerry's memory, are also appreciated.

**The family will hold a private service at Evergreen Lutheran on February 6, 2021.**

As Gerry has touched individuals the world-wide, and as his family would dearly love to share the joy of Gerry's life with each and everyone, a larger, **Celebration of Life**, will be scheduled in a few months when weather, and COVID conditions, improve. Please, stay tuned for details like date, location (Colorado, exact TBD), time.

## Memorial Service

**He goes on. His love, forever endures.**

### Verses/Quotations

**Psalm 118** 17-31

**2 Corinthians 2** 6-15, 16

**A prayer from Gregory Cole:** *"Dear God, I cry for those of us left behind, for the lonely ones with the hollows in our hearts. I ask You to comfort us, give us peace, restore hope, and lavish us with love, family, and belonging. In the depths of loss, meet us with Yourself."*

*I cry for the legacy this loved one leaves in death, for the ways the world has been made different by their presence, for the memories that become both more beautiful and more painful on this side of death. And, I pray that the work You have accomplished in this remarkable life will grow deeper wider, and stronger in the days to come, uninhibited by a weak opponent like death."*

**Covid widow, Anonymous:** *"I suddenly realized I had to change my attitude, that memories are not shackles, they are garlands and one should wear them like garlands and use them to communicate [with the dead]."* Note: the garland/wreath around Gerry's urn.

### Music:

"Our Father Has Light in his Window"-All, Old hymn, traditionally sung at all Hansen Family Funerals

"I went Down in the River to Pray" by [Allison Kraus](#)

"Morning Has Broken"-All

"Ave Maria" by [Andrea Bocelli](#) (or, arrangement of Choir's choice)-Nod to Gerry's Catholic upbringing, and his favorite song to master and sing, over the years

"The Sound of Silence" by [Disturbed, NASA version](#), with space images

### Photo Gallery:

*Coming soon, Please submit photos to [genah@bluefootengineering.com](mailto:genah@bluefootengineering.com)*