



Roger A. Barnhart

July 4, 1928 - October 5, 2017

Surrounded by his family, Dr. Roger Alan Barnhart, age 89, of Bellingham, WA, died on Thursday, October 5, 2017. Roger was a father, husband, scholar, Colonel, doctor, teacher, Rotarian, sailor, skier, hiker, and adventurer. Whether serving as an Army officer in Korea, caring for people in Papua New Guinea, or teaching troubled teens in Bellingham, Roger lived life to its fullest.

Born on the 4th of July, 1928, Roger was a patriot through and through. He believed there was only one way to live with honor, compassion, humility, and great joy. Raised by parents who valued knowledge and learning, his intellectual interests were varied and regularly supported. He graduated from high school at the age of 15 and proceeded to University of Chicago and then Lewis and Clark University, where he graduated at the age of 19, with a Bachelor of Arts in English & Philosophy. He taught high school for a year, bicycled around Europe, and had a brief stint as a newspaper reporter before enlisting in the Army to serve in the Korean War.

As an officer in the Army, he trained in the 82nd Airborne Jump School and was part of a special unit that became the precursor to the Green Beret, jumping behind enemy lines and effectively sabotaging enemy operations. Roger received a Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster for bravery in the line of duty. Deeply impacted by his time in war, Roger cried easily and laughed heartily because he had seen the best and the worst the world had to offer.

After his tour in Korea, Roger went to University of Oregon Medical School. During medical school he met and married his first wife, Beth, at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. His Army medical career took him to Madigan Army Medical Center, WA, Tripler Army Medical Center, HI, Stuttgart Army Medical Center, Germany, and Fitzsimons Army Medical Center, CO. After returning to civilian life in 1969, Roger continued in the Army Reserves, ultimately reaching the rank of Colonel.

Roger and Beth raised two children together; a daughter, Dana, and a son, Matt. They picked Bellingham as their home port, so they could be close to mountains and salt water. For many years, Roger ran an Ear, Nose, & Throat practice with Dr. Robert Newell. When he wasn't in surgery, Roger could be found enjoying nature whenever possible. The natural world was his church. In the outdoors, he celebrated his belief that God lived in the world around us, as well as in the heart of each human being. Spending time on the water and in the mountains nourished his mind, body, and spirit. (As did driving his Porsche slightly above the speed limit on Chuckanut.) He passed along his love of nature (and speed) to his children, who love this beautiful part of the world.

Roger married his second wife, Nancy, in 1996. After retiring, he volunteered his time as a teacher at Option High School in Bellingham School District for 13 years. Because of this dedication to the alternative education system, he received the only state-wide teaching award given to a volunteer. He called his class "Rhetoric", and his goal was to instill in his students the belief that they all had great potential and could achieve any goal on which they set their sights. This was an extension of his belief that education, communication, honor, and compassion are the necessary ingredients for a successful life.

Roger was a dedicated member of Rotary Club of Bellingham, where he lived

his belief in “Service Above Self”. Rotary gave financial and moral support to his beloved Options High School. He also enjoyed the camaraderie of the Cruising Club of America where he found fellowship with like-minded souls who loved talking about knots, navigation, and nippers as much as he did.

Roger is survived by his wife Nancy, his daughter Dana Berger and her husband David, his son Matt Barnhart and his wife Erica, and his grandson Ian Zeiler. Roger loved and was beloved by Nancy’s sisters, Peggy Kerns, Roberta Kerns and her partner Steve Crandall, B.G. Burdick and her husband Mike, and an extended family of much loved nephews, nieces, and their children.

Nancy and family are holding a private memorial for Roger. A public Celebration of Life will be held at a future date.

Donations in remembrance of Roger’s life may be made to Bellingham School District’s Options High School, Doctors Without Borders, Rotary Club of Bellingham, or Bellingham Technical School Scholarships.

Options High School:

<http://options.bellinghamschools.org/contact/>

Doctors Without Borders:

<https://donate.doctorswithoutborders.org/tribute.cfm>

Bellingham Technical School Scholarships:

<http://www.btc.edu/OurCommunity/Foundation/donate.aspx>

Tribute Wall

SF

“ I just learned of Dr Barnhart's passing. 35 years ago i went into surgery to have tubes put in my ears at age 5. While I was in surgery, they decided to also remove my tonsils. As I came to, Dr Barnhart was there with tears in his eyes because he felt so bad for telling me I wouldn't wake up with any pain. He was also a dear friend of my father and visited him regularly as he battled with cancer before passing in 1990.

Our thoughts are with your family.

Steve Faber

Grand Rapids, MI

Steve Faber - October 05, 2017 at 12:00 AM

MS

“ Dr Barnhart was a great Doctor .. He had a great compassion for his patients and his profession.He was a excellant person and I will always be grateful for knowing him

Mick Strickler - October 05, 2017 at 12:00 AM