

Today (4-16-22) is my Dad's birthday. He would be 103 years old. He was very important and influential in my life. I want to recount things I remember about him for my own benefit and yours. Otherwise many of these stories will be lost with me. He was born in Brooklyn in 1919 and his legal name was Bernard but he went by Bernie. He had no middle name. He was the third of 6 children of Sam and Henya – Willy, Gertie, Bernie, Ruthy, Selma and Lily. I don't know too much about his early life in Brooklyn, but I always assumed it was normal for the time and circumstances. One event that happened to him around 3 or 4 years old was an injury he suffered. He was pushing a stick in the street and it caught on something and pushed back into one of his testicles which had to be removed. I am sure it was traumatic. Ruthy later named and teased him as "one hung low". He never talked about it; I learned the story from Ruthy later in life. Ruthy also gave Bernie the nickname of "Buster Boy". Many people close to him called him Buster affectionately. Bernie was a good student and athletic. He liked to wrestle, play baseball, handball and stickball in the streets.

Brooklyn in the 1920's and 30's was a tough place to grow up. The family lived in a Jewish neighborhood but went to public school with all types of ethnic backgrounds. Being a Jew at that time put a target and stigma on you. Bernie never identified as a religious Jew – only cultural. Sam was an atheist, Bolshevik/Trotskyite and he influenced Bernie to be also. Henya was religious and tried to keep kosher in the house and observe Jewish holidays. Sam would ridicule Henya openly about this, but he went along with rituals. Bernie was fluent in Yiddish because that is what they spoke at home because Henya was not so good in English. Bernie loved Holidays for the celebration; he didn't care if they were Jewish, Christian, secular or whatever. He was very gregarious and enjoyed company. We always celebrated both Hanukkah and Christmas at our house. If Henya and Sam came over at this time, Henya would ask "vuts dat" in her heavy Yiddish accent. Bernie would say "Mama it's a Hanukkah bush". Sam would laugh. Bernie's four sisters and families lived in the metropolitan area and we

typically got together for Passover and other occasions. It was a joyous time usually. Conversation after dinner commonly became very intense. People would be yelling and screaming and Bernie was often at the center of it. He loved it – everybody did. We all parted company with hugs and kisses.

Bernie was a talker. He loved to converse with just about anyone. He considered himself an intellectual but he was not pretentious. He talked most times in the common tongue with a lot of slang and maybe cursing. He had a good vocabulary but adjusted it to the person he was talking to. He was always very aware of who he was talking with and what words he used. His goal was to communicate well with his audience and convey his ideas and thoughts in an easy comprehensible style. He could talk about complex ideas and make them simple for anyone to understand. He would not agree with B. F. Skinner: “the vernacular is clumsy and obese”. He proved the contrary often. He studied other people; all his life – the lowly and the high. He looked for weaknesses and strengths and everything in between. This was a lifetime addiction to study human characteristics. Bernie often quoted “Man's inhumanity to man”, in a poem by Robert Burns. He was fun and interesting to talk with. Bernie had a healthy sense of humor; and was keenly aware of the irony in life. He often told me starting at young age (maybe 5) – “Religion is the opium of the Masses”. He would explain they wanted your money and allegiance. Or he would say something like “it’s a con – if you believe that you’re a schmuck”. I have always agreed with Bernie with regards to any organized religion; but individual spirituality is a different matter for me.

If I was to describe my Dad’s philosophical disposition; I would say he was mostly a skeptic. He wished for positive change personally and socially; but was prepared or anticipated something less. He frequently said “hope springs eternal”. However when things did not turn out so great, he was not surprised. I think many New Yorker’s and people in general are

skeptics. I count myself as one too. You know part of the dynamic of being a skeptic is that you worry.

Bernie said something strange to me a few times in my young life. He said “I am going to give you drive”. When I first heard it at around 5 or 6 I had no idea what he meant. He never really explained it. He always talked philosophy with me and others. He was a complex thinker and he thought of life like a chess game with moves within moves. Many times over my entire life he said the greatest words ever written – “know thyself”. He understood how to motivate a person; which is an integral part of salesmanship. He figured out or conjectured what a person wanted and appealed to it in subtle or gross ways. He developed trajectories or strategies that would move people to a certain position – just like in chess. When I became 12 or 13 I never heard him say “I am going to give you drive” again. By this time I was driven to make money and to know something about myself. He had accomplished his task and he knew it. It was a gift and I am thankful. I am still driven.

Bernie went to work with Sam around 8 years old. Sam was a self-employed push cart salesman on the streets of New York. He sold vegetables and small trinkets from the cart. Willy had already been working with Sam for years; he was four years older. Willy was quiet and introspective and a very sweet boy by all accounts. Willy died of pneumonia when he was 16. It was right before Bernie’s bar mitzvah at 13. I still have Bernie’s prayer shawl from his bar mitzvah. Willy’s death devastated the entire family. I recently spoke with Aunt Lily and she said Henya had a nervous breakdown at this time. Lily is 95 years old now and the last one from this generation. She said she hated school because she was persecuted by other students and teachers because she was a Jew. She often feigned illness and Henya would let her stay home often with her and Bobbi. Bobbi was Sam mother who was all crippled up and lived with them. Bobbi had many ailments and Henya took loving care of her in

addition to all the other chores of running a large household. Everyone loved Bobbi. I was named for her and everyone called me Bobby. My middle name is William and that was for Willy. Around this time a cousin, Helen, was murdered and probably raped; although I don't know the whole story. Needless to say, this was a tough period in the Sterler history. Time marches on and so does life. Bernie continued to work with Sam and expanded his business. Bernie helped Sam get a truck (a hand crank Autocar) and they started to deliver vegetables all over NYC five boroughs. Sam never learned to drive the truck. Bernie and Sam were very strong because they picked up and moved heavy sacks of vegetables all the time. I remember Bernie as having big bulging forearms in his 30's and 40's, but less and less as he was older.

Bernie told me a story a couple of times about Himself, Willy and Sam. They were working with the push cart on a crowded street full of other vendors. They were next to a vendor who was a hunchback. Someone came and loudly asked "Hey Hunchback how much for this pot?" Sam instructed Willy and Bernie never to demean anyone like this even if it was true.

A story I heard first from Ruthy after Bernie died and confirmed by Lily goes like so: Sam and Bernie were delivering vegetable somewhere in Manhattan and they started to argue. Bernie was around 17 or so. No one recalls what the argument was about, but Sam said to Bernie something like "I wish it was you who died". Bernie stopped the truck in the middle of street traffic and got out. He left Sam stranded with the truck and undelivered vegetables. Sam could not drive. I believe this comment confirmed Bernie's suspicion of his parents, that Willy was the favorite son and he was a second string player. This weighed on Bernie his whole life. Although, he never talked with me about it.

Bernie started playing chess as a young teenager and spent a lot of time in Greenwich Village - chess Mecca. He played his whole life. He had a high A rating and played second board for the Long Island chess club in tournaments. Any tactical board or card game Bernie would play. He loved to weave in the strategy of a game – he was competitive. My Dad went to Boys High School in Brooklyn. It was, and still is, an elite academic school. After High School he went to CCNY and studied a wide variety of subjects, mostly in the liberal arts. He also still worked with Sam, but got involved with Union organizing, socialist groups and free thinking intellectuals and artists. He was very progressive for this time. NYC was a hotbed of social change for the entire world and he was in the middle of it. World War 2 came along and he joined the Army Air Corps. He was a B-17 bomber mechanic first stationed in Nome, Alaska and then Great Falls, Montana. He rose to the rank of Sergeant but was busted back to private for insubordination. He was honorably discharged at the end of the war.

Authority had always been a bone of contention for Bernie. I must say I have the same issue. After the war he bought a truck and started shipping damaged cakes from Brooklyn to Albany, New York. Sugar was still being rationed and cakes of any kind were in high demand. He could buy the damaged cakes at a low price and sell them in Albany at a good profit because they had no cakes. He did this for about a year with his partner, my Uncle Jack Rabinowitz. Then sugar was no longer rationed and this gig ended.

Housing of any kind was in short supply after the war because not any was being built during the war. Bernie moved back in with his parents on Gates Avenue, Brooklyn. Aimee came from Great Falls and moved in with all the Sterler's. Lynne came along in 1946. It was a crowded apartment, but I am told it was a happy time. After a couple of years a veteran housing project opened in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. Aimee, Bernie, Lynne and soon to be Elaine moved in. I came along in 1949 and Gail in 1951. We moved to

North Babylon in 1952 and my parents stayed there until 1987. Sharon was born in 1959.

After the cakes business, Bernie worked in a store selling TV's. He did very well, but had a falling out with the boss/owner. We had TV in our house early on before many other families did. He learned & realized he was good at sales. You have to absorb a lot of rejection and negativity when being a salesperson. He next worked in commercial real estate and travelled nationally. He made a big score on a single sale and quit in order to stay home. He invested his money in the house in North Babylon and started the juke box business. He had vending, music and pinball machines all over Long Island. I remember sorting nickels, dimes and quarters which were spread all over the living room floor 3 inches thick into rolls. The whole family participated. He did very well for about 4 years. Then, he said, organized crime wanted to partner and he refused. This competitor went to all his stops and offered the owners a better deal. He went out of this business around 1957. We had old pinball machines that worked in the basement for decades.

Around 1958 he started the sign business and setup a shop in Bay Shore, New York. He went around and sold signs to local businesses. I was 8 years old and started to work with him. He had 2 sign painters working for him - Jacques and John. Both were very good with freehand block lettering; I would fill in the interior of the letters with the same color paint among other tasks. John also did neon letters on top of the painted signs, which were sheet metal boxes that he made. He was especially talented and versatile in many trades. Jacques only painted and was very good when he wasn't drunk. One Saturday when I was 10 or 10.5 years old we went to work. On the way Bernie stopped at a liquor store and got a pint of cognac. I asked what that was for and he said "you will see". We then stopped at a shabby boarding house where Jacques rented a room. He got in the car and was perfectly normal; talking in his French accent about

this and that. We got to the shop and went inside. John was there, but not really doing anything. We sat around and the adults talked for about 5 to 10 minutes; I just quietly listened. Then Bernie stood up and took the cognac out of his coat pocket walked over to where Jacques was sitting and handed it him. Jacques had this incredulous look on his face; he timidly took the bottle, opened it and took a big swig – just one big gulp. Bernie took the bottle out of his hand and sat down. Jacques was immediately drunk – drunker than I have ever seen anyone. His speech was so slurred you couldn't decipher his words. Then green mucus started to come out of both nostrils. It became very long, down to his chest. All the while he was talking gibberish. After a couple of minutes John said "time to go". Bernie tenderly helped clean Jacques up with a towel and moved him into the car. On the way out he said "you stay here with John and I will come back". I could not believe what I had just seen; I looked astonished at John and he said "don't drink". I then learned that John and Bernie had staged this for my benefit. I will never forget this event.

The sign business was good for Bernie for about 4 years. He took partial payment, sometimes, in trade for his services. We had glorious Chinese food takeout once a week for about 2 years that the whole family enjoyed. Whenever I worked with Bernie we would go to lunch. Sometimes it would be Wetson's, a McDonald's knockoff (15 cents hamburgers and no sales tax) or Chinese or Italian food. Many times we dined for free at a place we were doing business with if it was a restaurant or Deli. I loved these times together – we talked about everything. My Dad did not drink, but he loved to eat and talk.

My dad loved to smoke cigarettes almost his entire life. He would sit for hours quietly smoking and thinking, maybe scribbling notes on paper. He spent a lot of time by himself. He was comfortable and confident in his own thoughts. He entertained himself by just thinking. He could be found sitting quietly in the backyard or porch or in his basement shop, sometimes in the

middle of the night, deep in a reverie frequently. He always welcomed company by anyone. I had many wonderful conversations with him at these times. Bernie was respected intellectually by most that knew him well and was sought out frequently. He did not usually tolerate opinions or comments that were racist, ignorant or politically insensitive. He was famous for skewering people who proposed such ideas. He was friendly with most and affable, but low or stupid ideas boiled his blood – he would respond confrontationally - often. He would not go into a bar full of rednecks and try and lecture them. He wasn't suicidal, rather, practical and knew when to walk away - usually. He knew what a lost cause was and often said it is wise to "retreat to fight another day". However he had a temper and sometimes it got the better of him. There is a metaphor which aptly described Bernie: no mud – no lotus. Don't we all emerge from the murky depths of our consciousness and endeavor to blossom?

Bernie was an early riser and could be found eating cereal at the kitchen table in the early morning. He loved mixing cereals together. There was a closet in the hallway that was used to keep all important papers for the household. He cut a hole in the floor and connected a plastic shoot that lead to a laundry basket in the basement where the washing was done. All laundry went here. He had sign painters make a 5" by 24" reminder – "Please flush the toilet" in bright red. He put it in both bathrooms at seating eye level across from the toilets and it worked most of the time.

He wanted me to have a bar mitzvah. I could care less. He said it was a cultural and family responsibility. So, when I was around 12.5 years old he took me to a Temple in Syosset, Long Island that was willing to teach me. On the way in the car every Saturday and back, he would give me cigarettes. We smoked like crazy and I loved it. I wasn't delighted with Hebrew, biblical teaching and I wasn't necessarily the best student, but I learned enough to have a bar mitzvah at 13.5 years old. The whole



extended family came to the event in Syosset. Grandma Henya was beaming with pride.

My parents insisted on dinner together most every night. We ate and talked about everything under the sun – politics, religion, science, art, philosophy, TV, movies, fashion, books – you name it. Everyone participated and it could get heated. It was a cherished family ritual. When our friends came over and stayed to have dinner with us; many were astounded that we had this discussion dynamic - everybody loved it. We all learned that not every family did this kind of activity. This was a great gift that our parents gave us all and themselves.

I don't know why my father left the sign business, but he did and started a flooring company. The floor system he sold was Torginol; paint chips embedded in polyurethane that was seamless and could adapt to any shape even stairs. It was brand new on the market then. It is still manufactured and sold today – it is a very good product. One notable event for me in the beginning of the flooring business is when Bernie rented a storefront in Bayshore. The first day we were cleaning it up and there was a really old man inspecting the electrical panel in the back of the store. Bernie said that is Mister Entenmann the landlord. He introduced me and I shook his hand. Entenmann's had a huge bakery/factory in Bayshore and sold day old and damaged product in a thrift store in the complex. We bought bakery goods frequently in the thrift store and everyone in the family enjoyed it. Entenmann's is now a national company. He did this business for about 2 years, but it did not go well for him. Bernie insisted in being involved in the installation of the floors. He should of just sold the product and manage the business. I was 12 years old and we were on a basement job in a somewhat local town one Saturday. Bernie said to start putting the polyurethane base coat down. I said we needed to seal the concrete, first, so stains would not bleed through. He said something like "fuck it". I knew this was wrong and we argued. I refused to do it and left

the house. I did not even know how to find my way home. Bernie came looking for me, but I hid in the bushes until he passed. I hitchhiked and asked the people who picked me up how to get home. I would never work for Bernie again for money. The flooring business failed terribly.

Bernie stumbled in and out of various business ventures and jobs over the next 4 or 5 years. I remember one was selling beer equipment and kegs of beer to homeowners. I remember going one night to deliver this product to a home owner who had a finished basement. They had a pool table and a bar and 4 or 5 of his friends were there. We set the equipment up in his bar and they were all thrilled – easy customers. This venture did not last too long; he made money at it, but he moved on to other things. I don't think money was his prime motivation; he wanted to be creative and recognized as an innovator.

The next business I clearly remember was Bank and Merchant Display. He built this machine in the basement that would display a picture for about 30 seconds and then flip and display another and then another repeatedly and then start over. This machine was enormously mechanically complex with motors, timers, gears and lights. He would go to a town (usually small to medium size) and contract with a local bank to put the machine in its lobby. Then he would go to local businesses and sell them advertisement to put in the machine. He did this for a few years. I helped him build a dark room in the basement to develop large pictures. We built a 4' X 8' sink out of wood, lined it with fiberglass fabric and covered it with polyurethane left over from the flooring business. It was waterproof and drained directly beneath the concrete slab in the basement. I manually chiseled a hole through 4 inches of concrete to insert a 2 inch plastic tube from the sink above. All the toxic chemicals from photo development went directly under the house. My father hired people to colorize the black and white photos and add advertising verbiage for the Bank and Merchant machine. People liked the idea but the machine frequently broke down. So did the business.

Around this time my father had a nervous breakdown. He got many shock treatments and after 6 months or so he pulled out of it. It was a very bad time for the entire family.

From the beginning my father never paid me very much. He would promise me \$5 for the day, but would end up giving me 1 or 2 dollars or nothing but a promise. I think this is how his father treated him, but I am just speculating. This is another reason I stopped working for him. When I was working for Mr. Kevick (starting at age 13) as a carpenter, he paid me for every hour I worked. My mother and father argued about money all the time. I admired my father's ingenuity and imagination but he made things too complicated. He was really a complex man and craved attention and recognition. He had drive!

In North Babylon we lived about 500 yards (2 blocks) from Greenwood Civic Association (we were members) which contained among other things a 50 acre spring-fed lake. We went there all the time to swim, fish, hike in the woods, picnic on the beach and ice skate. We called it "the lake". When I was about 6 my father was teaching me to swim. He held me by my stomach and had me move my arms and paddle my feet. He then moved further out in the water, let me go and moved backward and told me to swim to him. I panicked and sank and took in a lot of water. He pulled me up and then instructed me in how to float. This was very helpful and I learned to swim that day.

We occasionally would take Saturday or Sunday car rides together. We would all pile in the family car (no seatbelts) and drive around Long Island and many times NYC. These were almost always very enjoyable times. My mother would pack a big lunch of sandwiches and treats along with Kool-Aid or lemonade in a jug. My Dad would herd us all in the car. My sisters

would bring their dolls and other stuff and I would bring toys to play with too. My Dad would get in the driver's seat and we would wait. My mother would always keep us waiting. I think intentionally to drive Bernie nuts. She would be in the house running the vacuum or washing some dishes – or whatever. Bernie would send one of us kids into the house to get her. She would always say “I am only going to give it a lick and a promise”. The kid would come out and report to him about the lick and a promise. He would start beeping the horn and yelling “AIMEE” out the window. In a couple of three minutes she would come out all dolled up and cheerful as ever. Then, we would go off for the day with Bernie driving, smoking and talking about places we went. Like that the town of Babylon was started in 1608, or Montauk Highway was originally a dirt road called King's Highway and went from Montauk Point to NYC and still exists on the south shore of Long Island and is 100 miles long. He knew a lot about local history, geography and he shared it with us. We had great trips around the Island but especially NYC. My father knew the city like the back of his hand. He would tell us “this is where George Washington gave his farewell address” or he would take us to the Fulton Fish Market or NYC Flower Market. I remember a street full of vendors who just sold pickles. In these interesting neighborhoods my Dad would park the car and we would walk around. Bernie would buy us giant pickles wrapped in newspaper right off the street that were delicious. We went to a block/Street full of individual hardware stores as far as the eye could see. Sometimes Bernie would buy us potato knishes or hotdogs from street cart vendors in these neighborhoods that were fantastic. We would sometimes go to the Automat where you could buy a piece of pie through a little door that opened for 5 cents. I remember buying creamed spinach at this place which I really enjoyed. My Mother often made creamed spinach as part of dinner just for me because I liked it so much. Many times we went to Ratner's which was a famous Jewish kosher dairy restaurant on the Lower East Side. This was a group favorite. The bread and mushroom barley soup was incredible, to say nothing about the cheese blintzes and potato latkes. The waiters would sing and kibbitz around. We had many terrific excursions sometimes with no specific destination at all.

I remember I was around 11 and we went fishing off the Babylon docks. My father bought bloodworms that have teeth at a bait shop (at my instruction) and he rented a rowboat. I already had fishing poles and we rowed out a ways. No one would bait the hooks but me because these worms were nasty and could bite. We caught some fish. I had to take the fish off the hooks as well. We caught flounder and flukes and one blowfish. We through the blowfish back in the water because it is poisonous. But the others we took home. My mother cleaned the fish and cooked them as part of our dinner. My mother and I liked the fish but everyone else was a bit squeamish.

In the late 50's to the mid 60's my father and all his sisters organized the "Cousin's Club". We would meet once a year in the summer at Belmont Park for a family reunion. Belmont Lake State Park is a 463-acre day-use state park located in North Babylon and the former estate with mansion of the Belmont family – apparently it was there summer house. A lot of the extended family would show up, down to second and third cousins from the metropolitan area. I remember crowds of more than 100 people. It was a terrific day – everyone would bring food – they had picnic tables, fire pits and charcoal grills – we would play baseball, badminton, croquet, horseshoes, music, swim, rent rowboats and canoes to go on the 100 acre lake. Kids and adults were everywhere. Of course my father would play chess, many times with Uncle Harold – our Dentist. People would stand around and watch. I never played chess with Uncle Harold but I know he was pretty good. Uncle Harold respected me and I had many fine conversations with him over the decades. I loved him dearly and still do. We would go early in the morning to cordon off tables for the Cousin's Club group. The park was about 2 miles from our house. This was always a fun time and a big event.

In the wintertime us kids all loved it when it snowed a lot. School would be canceled and we all went outside bundled up and played in the snow. There were a lot of kids all our ages that we played with on the block – Kime Avenue. We would make snowmen and forts and have snowball fights. When I was around 11 my father made this catapult contraption in the basement that could launch a snowball 200 feet. It was adjustable in trajectory and an instant hit. We played with it for years. We loved going ice skating at the lake and adults would make fires on the beach to warm us all up. I remember when the roads were all snowy and icy, Bernie would allow us kids to hold onto the back bumper of the car and he would slowly drive down the block. I know this was dangerous, but no one ever got hurt and we loved it. To say Bernie was a risk taker is a bit of an understatement. These were fun activities and times.

Another business I remember in the late 60's to mid 70's was advertising on tote bags, pencils, buttons and stickers. He would sell these customized things to Dentist, Doctors, Deli's and many other businesses. He got my sister Elaine to do the artwork and he would sell the product all over the place. Also at this time he got a job with the Long Island Pennysaver to sell advertising on a commission only basis to local businesses for this free giveaway publication. I still have some of the pencils, stickers and original artwork that Elaine produced. Bernie coached Elaine in the work to produce some very clever stuff. I did the same thing with Elaine on the artwork for my book – WouldArt. Bernie had an agreement with Pennysaver owner to sell his totes, pencils and stamp stuff to the same clients he got ads for the Pennysaver. Bernie got Elaine her first graphic artist job with the Pennysaver. The Pennysaver is still in business today: <https://longislandpennysaver.net/> He did this on and off for a many years – more of a part time gig and did well in this endeavor. He was ahead of his time in this venture.

My mother and other family members begged Bernie to get a job and just sell something - anything. He could sell sand to someone living in the desert. He did take jobs for a while but would grow board and/or have a fight with the boss. He always wanted to be the boss. He did not take direction very easily.

The next thing he got involved with was windmills that produced electricity in the mid-seventies. He built a prototype in the basement and went out and got investors to ramp it up. He got a sheet metal manufacturer in the Bronx, New York to partner with him and started to build machines. He took a salary, which my mother loved, and worked constantly on it. He was a homespun engineer. Then in the late seventies President Jimmy Carter offered a 2 for 1 tax credit for alternative energy projects. This was a windfall and they raised many millions, most of which Bernie did not see because the Bronx partner had control of the money. However they bought him a new luxury car and increased his salary and benefits and he went along. His machines never worked reliably, and in 1983 to 1985 the company was investigated by the IRS for tax fraud. The parent company was held somewhat accountable with a small fine, but slithered away with most of the money. Bernie escaped pretty much unscathed except his income stopped, but he kept the car. Bernie said many times he should have gone into solar electricity because windmill mechanics failed all the time. Bernie had me clear out his tools from the Bronx shop which I still have. My Dad loved to buy me tools and frequently did, which I still have.

My dad wanted desperately for me to love chess. We played hundreds of games together over the years. I am a very strong player as a result, but never near as good as Bernie. He would encourage and teach me constantly. He would say "rethink that move". Or "take that move back". And then show me why it was a bad move. He was a good teacher, but too strong for me. I never really beat him once. He would say "you won", but I would say "you gave me the game". He would not argue my point. He

would show me openings, middle game and he was very strong in the end game. My Dad always emphasized the importance of losing gracefully. He would say “anyone can win, but it is how you lose that counts”. Or “Never blame the other player – take responsibility”. He stressed that many times you learn more from losing than winning – “pay attention to your loss” – was his admonition. One game we played a lot was reversi and I could beat Bernie 60% of the time, we both loved it. I haven’t played reversi in thirty years. My Dad had chess buddies come over all the time and play all day. John Dale was a master level player and Bernie lost to him 9 out of 10 times. When he won a game he was ecstatic and we could verbally hear his exclamations of joy. John was an engineer of some kind and was married to Helen and they had 2 daughters (I don’t remember their names) around Lynne and Elaine’s age. They lived in a big, very old house on the main thoroughfare in Babylon, the town south of us. The whole family would visit and vice versa on occasion. Aimee was close friends with Helen and the older girls were good friends too. John’s parents had a farm in upstate NY and they would take in boarders. We went there a couple of times for a few days. It was a lot of fun. They would serve dinner with fresh unpasteurized milk from their cow which was heavy with cream. The food was country style and delicious. I remember standing in the middle of a crystal clear stream in front of their big farm house with large rainbow trout swimming all around me. This was the original Airbnb. Another game John and Bernie played a lot was checkers and Bernie would win most of the time. Most of the time Bernie was modest about beating someone in any game – he understood defeat very well and did not boast. He usually just said “good game” whether it was or not. He was exceptional at checkers and I don’t know why he did not play in tournaments. A lot of chess players did play checkers competitively. He always said checkers was a very deep game. However chess was his first love and that is what he focused on most.

Bernie missed the computer revolution. He died in 1991, before things really kicked in, but he would have loved it. The internet would have been



his playground. It is perfect for what he wanted to do: spread ideas, sell things and debate and fight with opposing ideologies and not have to leave his chair. He would have reveled in it and probably had many websites. He did buy a computer chess board game shortly before he died and he said it could beat him once in a while, but not often. I tried it at the time and it destroyed me. Today there are computer programs that beat all human beings – all the time.

Bernie's health at this stage was in serious decline. He had severe ankylosis spondylitis and was in constant pain. Things only got worse over time. He kept busy drawing and inventing things, playing chess, Boggle, reversi, checkers or other games, watching TV and movies, talking on the phone or in person, eating and of course - smoking. However he did not really work for money anymore after windmills. His health was passed the point of no return.

I helped Aimee & Bernie fix up their house in 1986 and they sold the next year and moved to Texas to be close to their only Grandchild – Ray. The twins were born and Andre got a job at UCLA, so the whole group moved to LA. Bernie died at the Long Beach Veterans Hospital on 12-9-91, he was 72 years old. Bernie was an atheist to the very end and had clear faculties and cognition. He had no fear of death; he wanted it. I was in the room when a doctor said they had to remove fluid from his lungs or he going to die. He said – “so what” - and refused treatment. He had great physical pain and wanted to be done with it. I believe he also had emotional and psychological pain that he was weary of. When a person feels spent, death is an appealing passageway; much like sleep. Don't we all practice dying every night when we go to sleep? About an hour before he died, he said he saw a white light. Bernie was brave and died with courage – he was not afraid at all; his passing was a final gift. I was at his bedside when he took his last breath. I miss him and still love him dearly. I am very thankful for my father and our close relationship my entire life. I

still feel close to him even though he is gone. I wish I could still talk to him; sometimes I hear his thoughts/voice in my mind. God bless his soul.

I hope my daughters read this again when they are my age (72) and remember us all. I expect My Grandson Rohan will read this when he is old enough to explore his roots. And I hope you all enjoyed reading these vignettes and please feel free to share with other family I missed and friends.

Best wishes and Love to all.