



Joe Zaerr

September 9, 1932 - March 19, 2025

Joe Benjamin Zaerr died on March 19, 2025. He was born in Los Angeles on September 9, 1932, to John and Eleanor Zaerr. His first memories were of playing on the orange ranch where his father worked and crawling under a quilt his mother was making, the quilt that later hung on the wall of the room where he died. The family moved to Fort Collins, Colorado, for a time, then back to California.

His parents were not wealthy. Joe remembered a time when his father gave him a quarter for candy and when Joe brought back the change, his father said that was all the money the family had. His father's generosity inspired Joe throughout his life, and he learned from him a wide range of skills: agriculture, carpentry, mechanics, and hunting. His mother inspired him to love music.

Joe went to college at the University of California, Berkeley, where he majored in Forestry. He played string bass in the church orchestra, and during a rehearsal for Handel's Messiah, a string broke, so he went to turn pages for the pianist, Lois Marie. Several years later, they were married on January 26, 1954.

After graduation, Joe served in the navy as a photo interpretation officer on aircraft carriers. For a time, he was on the admiral's ship, and he remembered

having charge of the fleet while the admiral slept.

When his term in the navy ended, Joe went back for a PhD at Berkeley, and it was during this time that his three children were born. They grew up camping and hiking in the forest and playing music together.

In 1965, after a post-doc year in Laurel, Maryland, Joe took a position as a professor in the School of Forestry at Oregon State University, where he spent a long and productive career. Many anecdotes are told about the ways he nurtured students and amused his colleagues.

After he retired in 1995, he played string bass in the OSU symphony, advocated for equitable health care, worked as a mediator, and built a kit car of a Mercedes Gullwing. He and Lois Marie hiked the Oregon stretch of the Pacific Crest Trail, and he engaged in many hunting and fishing adventures. Even three months before his death, he was playing string bass with his family.

Throughout his life, Joe was eager to help people whenever he could, and to support others in their efforts to help. He is survived by his wife of seventy-one years, Lois Marie; and by his children, Linda Marie, Laura, and Jon; and by his grandchildren, Eleanor, Philip, Laura, and Simon. He was loved and respected by his family, his colleagues, his students, and his friends. He will be sorely missed.

A memorial service honoring Joe will take place at 2:00 on April 19, 2025, at the First Presbyterian Church in Corvallis. Memorial donations may be made to Corvallis Housing First, <https://corvallishousingfirst.networkforgood.com/>

Previous Events

Memorial Service

APR **19**. 2:00 PM (PT)

First Presbyterian Church
114 SW 8th St
Corvallis, OR 97333

Tribute Wall

DK

“ *Though I'm having to miss the service today, I wanted to extend my heartfelt warm regards to the family and friends of Joe. He has left a lasting legacy particularly within the healthcare community. RIP, Joe. Sincerely, Dick Knowles*

Dick Knowles - April 19, 2025 at 12:35 PM