



## Berni Rolf Simoneit

September 7, 1937 - July 23, 2023

It is with a heavy heart and great sadness that we let you know Bernd “Berni” Rolf Tatsuo Simoneit, loving husband, adored uncle, friend, professor and world-renown scientific researcher, passed away in his home on July 23, 2023 surrounded by loved ones. He was 85 years old. He always lived his own way, and stayed true to form spending every last moment with the people he loved, defying the doctors by surviving his first move to hospice by almost a year, during which he managed to drive up to BC twice, fly to Arizona, and make numerous smaller trips, as well as catch up and continue working with a multitude of friends and colleagues he’d gathered during his life, so well lived.

Berni was born between the world wars on September 7, 1937 to Kurt and Anna (nee Dietrich) Simoneit in Heilbronn, Germany. He credits his mother with installing and nurturing his sense of curiosity, which was evident in everything he did in life and every conversation he had. He spent a lot of time exploring the woods near his home, often pretending to be in frontier America. He gave his family many a scare, including tripping while running through the woods with an open knife resulting in a hospital stay and scarred abdomen. His sister Dagmar joined the family when he was 7. In his early teens his parents made the difficult decision to immigrate to North America, which fit well with Berni’s love of travel, sense of curiosity, and desire to wear cowboy boots and Western style shirts. The family settled in Rhode Island where he graduated from Warwick

Veterans Memorial High School and earned his undergrad from the University of Rhode Island. He then went on to attend Boston University and MIT, after which he made the leap to the West Coast, to work at the Space Sciences Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley. While in the Bay area he attended a party where he met the love of his life, Doreen (Gee), a flight attendant with Pan Am. He did not get her number (this was before the Internet or cellphones, and she was the guest of a guest), but to Doreen's amazement he found her and so began their lifelong adventure, exploring the world.

Berni loved being part of the extended Gee family and joined in the family games and celebrations. While most of the Gees reside in England, Doreen's sister Jenny, husband Mike, and daughters moved to BC, Canada, which allowed the families to spend much more time together including almost every Christmas. Berni accepted a position at what is now the College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences at Oregon State University and in 1981 they moved to Corvallis, Oregon, a town they fell in love with and where they created deep roots. They quickly developed lifelong friendships which are like extended family and are supportive to this day. A year later, 10 year old Amanda, Mike and Jenny's eldest daughter, moved in for what was supposed to be a year but turned into 8, and she became their daughter.

Berni was an avid collector. He collected stamps, coins, and rocks and among many other interests and was a connoisseur of red wine, mushrooms (especially freshly picked chanterelles), and good food. His favourite hobby, though, was traveling. His home office is referred to as 'the museum' and it reflects his interests in space, western frontier history, geology, and travel, interspersed amongst the stacks of meticulously organized research documents. He had a style of his own, in particular, preferring Balinese and Guayabera shirts, and avoiding formal wear whenever possible. He was rarely home for more than a couple weeks in a row as there were always new places

to explore, people to talk to, and samples to collect and examine. He made friends with colleagues and their families around the world, often visiting them or taking them along on his adventures.

Among the many with decades of fond memories to look back on are Doreen, Amanda Hillis (Robert) of Vancouver, BC and her sisters Sarah Day (Chris) of Duncan, BC and Caroline Taylor (Simon) of Auckland, NZ, and his sister Dagmar Huber. He was the beloved Opa of Taylor and Aiden Hillis, Matthew, Landon, and Nathan Day, and Emma and Eliza Taylor; a dear brother-in-law to Doreen's siblings Christopher (Nancy), Jenny (Mike), Robin (Jen), and sister-in-law Gloria; and deeply adored uncle to their 11 children and families, to Dagmar's children Debbie, Kim, Laurel, Mike and Heinz and their families, and to the children of many close friends.

Following Berni's wishes there will be no formal ceremony, but your memories are very much wanted. Please share below. If you feel compelled to honor his memory with a financial contribution, make a donation to the charity of your choice that reflects your memories of him.

His close colleagues Joan O. Grimalt (Institute of Environmental Assessment and Water Research (IDAEA), Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC), Barcelona) and Phil Meyers (Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) have written a touching obituary covering his professional life which has been published on the Geochemical Society website which we encourage you to read.. <https://www.geochemsoc.org/news/2023/08/03/bernd-berni-rt-simoneit-1937-2023>

# Tribute Wall

“ Memories of Bernie as an academic and scientist

*The first contact I had with Bernie was in 2002 through the internet when, as a geologist, I was looking for specialists in Organic Geochemistry (on the subject of hydrothermal oil). I located three of them, contacted them and the only one who answered to my emails was Bernie.*

*Therefore, I began to receive instructions, online, from Bernie to carry out on-site sampling. I sent the collected samples to his lab at Oregon University @ Corvallis, for processing. Bernie verified that this oil of hydrothermal origin was genuine, which meant a geological discovery worthy of investigation and publication for scientific dissemination.*

*In December 2002, I met Bernie in person in San Francisco, a city that Bernie enjoyed and knew very well. The reason was the Fall Meeting, of the American Geophysical Union (AGU).*

*From there, our friendship relationship was strengthened both on a personal and academic level, because in October 2003 the University of Guadalajara invited him to teach a course on his specialty (GC-MS).*

*In December 2003, at Bernie's invitation, I went on an academic stay to visit his laboratory at Oregon University @ Corvallis. Graciously, he and Doreen put me up at his house. From Corvallis we drove to San Francisco to participate in that year's Fall Meeting (AGU). On that trip from Corvallis, I still remember, we visited the redwood forests of Redwood National Park and the famous Chandelier Tree.*

*In 2007, Bernie arranged for two Mexican graduate students in Organic Chemistry to be received in the Laboratory of Dr. Staci L. Simonich at the University of Oregon.*

*In March 2014, Bernie returned to the University of Guadalajara to continue advising researchers and students who were enthusiastic about the analytical technique in which Bernie was an expert, GC-MS (gas chromatography-mass spectrometry).*

*Pedro & Rosi Zarate. December 2023.*



**Pedro Zárate** - December 14, 2023 at 12:35 PM

DS

“ We met Berni when we arrived as newlyweds in Berkeley in the fall of 1964, as he and Dennis were both in Al Burlingame’s research group in the Chemistry Department. It wasn’t long after that that Berni met a really neat girl - Doreen. And so began decades of friendship and connection even as we found ourselves living in different parts of the country and the world. Many hikes, especially in the Siskiyous and as far afield as Sicily, visits to Eagle Crest, plays at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and wonderful meals, whether fine restaurants or Doreen’s fine cooking. A little schnapps afterward.

*A special memory is that sudden trip to Carson City, Nevada, in 1968 when Bernis and Doreen were informed that their wedding at Doreen’s family home in England would not be legal because Berni would not have been in the country long enough! Three Porsches, a long drive, and the Little Chapel of the Bells (“Your credit card welcome here”) to the rescue.*

*How we will miss his endless curiosity, his determination to make the best of his life to the last, his smile.*

**Dennis and Ellen Smith** - September 01, 2023 at 08:48 PM

SI

“ Although we rarely met, he was a very special person to me. I will always remember Onkel Berni...



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**Silvia** - August 15, 2023 at 02:15 PM

SR

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Silvia Czaia Rumpff** - August 14, 2023 at 12:34 PM

DH

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



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**Dagmar Huber** - August 13, 2023 at 06:03 PM

DH

“ *Berni was my brother and a lifelong friend, a positive influence throughout my life. I don't think he ever missed a wedding. He always sent cards from wherever his travels took him. No matter how busy his schedule, he had time for family and friends. In his younger years he always dabbled with chemistry. I remember how he turned our creek in Rhode Island a very bright lime green. He once had a little explosion in his room, no serious harm done... He designed the cover for our high school yearbook. Less than a month before starting at the R.I. School of Design for architecture, and with the advice from father, he decided to attend U.R.I. and pursue the field of chemistry. Wise decision. His many achievements made us all very proud. It's near impossible for me not to brag about his incredible career. I will miss his regular calls, his smile, his cooking, his advice, his love. He was an exceptional human being and the very best brother, forever in my heart.*

*Dagmar (Simoneit) Huber*

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**Dagmar Huber** - August 13, 2023 at 06:03 PM

DH

“ *2 files added to the album Memories Album*



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**Dagmar Simoneit Huber** - August 13, 2023 at 01:33 PM



“ 24 files added to the album *Memories Album*



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**DeMoss-Durdan Funeral Home and Crematory** - August 07, 2023 at 07:49 PM

PH

“ *Berni was my colleague and mentor during my post-doc at Space Sciences Lab, UoC, Berkeley in the early 1970's. He and Doreen were very supportive and the friendship continued when I took Teddie as my wife back to New Zealand. As well as the science, Doreen was an air hostess on PanAm flights into Auckland and Teddie has family on Vancouver Island. Our anglo temperaments gelled with Berni's very different but always sympatico background. We were hoping to host Berni and Doreen in NZ in the coming months but it is not to be. Our sincere condolences to Doreen and her family.*



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**Patrick & Teddie Holland** - August 06, 2023 at 08:00 AM

KS

“ Our family hosted Berni and Doreen for last year’s Thanksgiving and of course we made spaetzle and red cabbage. We will cherish memories like this one and others. Aidan has been expressed his gratitude to Berni for taking the time to share all of his wonderful treasures in his office and being so kind and patient with him. We will miss his smile.



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**kim stanley** - August 02, 2023 at 02:36 PM

AH

“ We will always remember Uncle Berni with great affection. A highly intelligent man but never patronising - he never made us lesser mortals feel daft! He was always interested in family, what they were doing and open minded. He could be fun, when Nick and Molly were young they were so impressed that he was aware of their music (and liked red wine). Molly loved his cowboy suits. They thought him rather cool! We will remember his love of nature and remain grateful that he was so willing to share his knowledge and love of the outdoors – particularly during one memorable family holiday in 2014. He was a remarkable man.  
Anne, Andrew, Nick and Molly Hitchcock

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**Anne Louise Hitchcock** - August 02, 2023 at 01:27 PM

JG

“ *Bernie was an excellent friend, mentor and scientist. He was always a great help. I never received a refusal to any request. My postdoctoral period with him at Oregon State University State University boosted my scientific career very significantly.*

*As a scientist he pioneered many initiatives that were subsequently developed. For example, in recent years it has become fashionable to perform non-selective analysis on environmental samples. Bernie had already done this forty years earlier. In fact, he is probably the scientist who discovered the most biomarkers, paving the way for the studies of many other scientists. The enormous number of scientific citations that his work has received (more than 40,000; Scopus) is proof of this.*

*Personally, I will miss a good friend and a reference person in my life. The scientific community will miss his contributions, ideas, good humor, friendship and inspiration. We will all miss Bernie.*

*Joan Grimalt*

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**Joan O. Grimalt** - August 02, 2023 at 10:09 AM

SD

“ My Uncle Berni was there on the day I was born, my mum was driven to the hospital in his Mercedes. When we moved to Canada, they were living in California. Uncle Berni loved science and travelling, but he also loved Disney Land. He took us there when we were young and visited them in California and he took my whole family there about 10 years ago. Later, when I was around 8, Uncle Berni became a professor at Oregon State University. I know the road to Oregon very well, as we drove to visit them at least 3 times a year. And they also would make the drive up to visit us in Campbell River. A family dinner is not complete without my Aunt and Uncle. Berni influenced me to go to university, to think deeply, and ask questions. He wanted to show us the world and share his love of travelling with us. Berni showed us he loved us by sharing his time with us. In his last year of life, at the age of 85, he still insisted on driving from Oregon to Duncan to visit us. Uncle Berni, you will be missed. You were a grandfather (Opa) to my children and more than an uncle to me. May there be red wine, mushrooms, rocks, and peace wherever your spirit rests. Love Sarah

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Sarah Day - July 29, 2023 at 06:45 PM



“ Thank you so much for taking me in at 10 and making me your daughter. You expanded my world in so many ways and made me feel so loved. While I will never share your appreciation for fungi and fine wine, I will treasure the memories of exploring nature (with and without the chocolate bribes), cooking and eating great food, travel, collecting samples from lakes near Yellowstone and from trees in botanical gardens, going on almost all the rides at DL, DW, and US, having the most diverse music collection, and showing my boys the world since the day Taylor was born to your last. I love you so much. You will always be with me.



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**Amanda Hillis** - July 29, 2023 at 05:14 PM