



Howard Bassett

December 15, 1939 - October 10, 2014

Howard Bassett, 74, died Friday, October 10, at Mercy Hospital in Springfield, after a second battle with cancer. His actual causes of death were kidney failure and pneumonia, following successful colon cancer surgery. He felt extremely blessed to have survived 33 years, following his lung cancer surgery in 1981.

He was born December 15, 1939, in Cleveland, OH, the son of Yeruchim Louis "Jack" Bassett and Betty {Shapiro} Bassett, and was preceded in death by his parents (in 1988 and 1981, respectively), in Los Angeles, California. He is survived by one older half-brother, Merle Fred Bassett, of Cambria, California; and by one younger brother, Robert Martin "Bob" Bassett, and Bob's wife, Susan Gail "Sue" {Himel} Bassett, of Tarzana, California, and their two sons Gregory Scott "Greg" Bassett and his wife Lisa and son Joshua; and Michael David "Michael" Bassett.

Howard's paternal grandfather's surname was originally Bassichis, which was changed to Bassett at Ellis Island when he, his wife, and three eldest surviving children immigrated to America from Koidanov, Minsk, Russia {now Belarus},

in 1899. They settled in Cleveland, Ohio, where their youngest child {Howard's father, Jack Bassett}, was the first child in his family to be born in the USA.

Also at about the turn of the 20th century, the Shapiros, Howard's maternal grandparents, immigrated to America from Vilnius, which has been variously under the control of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. They were married in about 1904 in Chelsea, Massachusetts, where their first three children were born {Betty was the second of these}. After they moved to Cleveland about 1915, their fourth child was born.

Howard's parents moved the family to Southern California when he was five, where they lived in several towns in the Los Angeles area over the years, the parents ending their days in West Los Angeles.

In spite of a very promising track career as a sprinter {in which he was beating high school seniors}, Howard left school after the 7th grade, due to his difficulties with undiagnosed dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

But his prodigious memory allowed him to continue informally educating himself, all his life. He loved words, and was extremely talented at using his vocabulary to great effect in various sales occupations. He also taught himself the fields of gemmology and art restoration, in both of which he became an acknowledged expert.

Howard was a remarkable man, who struggled all his life to overcome handicaps that would have crushed and defeated others. He was by no means perfect, as he was always the first to admit. He made mistakes, often big ones, and made many poor choices, with bad outcomes and serious consequences. But his own relentless conscience punished him far worse for his transgressions, than any person or institution could ever have done.

Probably his greatest fault was that he found it so hard to forgive himself for his failures.

He always seemed genuinely surprised that so many people liked him, and enjoyed his company. But despite his bluff, sometimes arrogant or even verbally aggressive demeanor, at heart he was actually quite shy and emotional, and often felt socially awkward. Because he'd had to fight so very hard to survive in a world where literacy and a certain amount of conformity are often taken for granted, Howard also had a very hard time trusting people. But once he gave that trust, the loyalty that followed was absolute, unconditional, and forever.

Howard was married four times, first to Judith Gayle "Judie" (Gofstein) Marlowe, on June 1, 1958, in Tijuana, Mexico. They were later divorced, but Judie survives him in Citrus Heights, California. Two children were born in Los Angeles, California, to this marriage: Ronald Paul "Ronnie" Bassett Sours

Marlowe {deceased 1999, San Francisco, California}, and Roxanne Holly Bassett Sours Griffin. Second, he married Rachel Mary Harkema (deceased 2005, Auburn, California) on December 21, 1962, in Santa Monica, California. They, too, were divorced, and one child was born to this marriage: Tietia Laura (Bassett Gilbert) Baxter. Third, he married Suzanne Zimmerman {deceased April 26, 1977, San Francisco, California), on March 12, 1968, in Las Vegas, Nevada. There were no children from this marriage. Fourth, he married Bettyann Reed, in Reno, Nevada, on Jun 18, 1977. During their 38 years together, they lived in San Francisco, Sacramento, Orangevale, Grizzly Flat, and Los Angeles, California; Vernonia, Oregon; Evanston and Chicago, Illinois; and moved to Bolivar, Missouri, in the mid-'90s. Polk County is Bettyann's ancestral home, as she is the eldest child of David Wooderson Reed and Anita "Marcine" (Davison) Reed {deceased 2000 and 1999, respectively). who were both born in, and were long-time residents of, Polk County.

Howard was very close to his in-laws, and thought of them as his second set of parents.

Howard and Bettyann had no children together, but Howard was step-father to Bettyann's three children from her prior relationships {and step-grandfather to their children], all of whom survive Howard: Rachel Beth Reed Dushoff, of North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; Anita Marcine Reed-Hooper and her husband Rodney A. "Rod" Hooper, of Urbana, Missouri, and their three daughters Sarah, Mariah, and Gabrielle "Ellie"; and David Charles Bird and his wife Sheila Renee (Sather) Bird, of Euless, Texas, and their son Blake and daughter Mdison "Maddie". Howard is also survived by Bettyann's siblings,

nieces, and nephews.

During their early years together, Howard and Bettyann lived a very colorful life -- but it was certainly never boring! As a welcome respite from stress, they would often go camping on the Mokelumne River in the Gold Rush country of the Sierras, near Jackson, California. Their only equipment was a frying pan, a cake-cooling rack for a grill, and a couple of blankets. By no means experienced campers, they nevertheless found peace and rejuvenation during these simple weekend escapes from city life.

Howard especially loved animals of all kinds, and had a great instinctive understanding of them. He never feared a dog -- even a menacing guard-dog -- and somehow communicated his sympathy and friendship to them in the first few seconds after meeting them. But his favorites were small house-pet dogs, including a miniature dachshund named Potsie, who lived to be 17, and a silky terrier named Tuffy, who lived to be about 12, passing away only a year ago.

Though Howard was born into a Jewish family, and all of his first three wives were Jewish, Howard never practiced the Jewish faith, himself. His dyslexia prevented him from being able to read the texts he'd have been required to learn, in order for him to achieve his bar mitzvah (the Jewish ceremony whereby a boy is accepted as an adult member of the temple community).

But Howard was very spiritual, and when he encountered Christian concepts, especially at 12-Step Group meetings, he soon realized that he considered himself to be a non-denominational Christian. When he and Bettyann had

especially big problems, he would often suggest that they go to the nearest church -- any church -- to pray and talk quietly, and to receive welcome counsel and advice from the minister, pastor, or priest who

might notice them sitting there.

In other words, although he felt very close to God, and very much wanted to belong to a community of like-minded people, he was overly self-conscious about his acceptability to a group, and so had never formalized a relationship with any church. But during his final illness in the ICU at Mercy Hospital, he was baptized by Rev. Cathy Cox, his friend and spiritual confessor. His last clear words were, "God gave me the gift of life, and now it's time for me to give it back." What a wonderful gift that was, for him to give to his loved ones, too!

Howard's intensity, curiosity, intelligence, tenacity, kindness, gentleness, sense of humor, loyalty, and childlike good-heartedness will be greatly missed by all who loved him.

Cremation is under the care and direction of Butler Funeral Home. Services will be held at 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18, at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 201 S. Killingsworth, Bolivar, with the Rev. Cathy Cox officiating. Interment of the ashes will be in the St. Alban's columbarium.

Cards may be sent to Bettyann Reed, 224 E. Walnut St., Bolivar, MO, 65613, and/or Bob and Sue Bassett, 19558 Rosita St., Tarzana, CA 91356. Family and friends may also sign the guestbook or leave private

condolences at www.butlerfuneralhome.com.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Polk County Humane Society, P.O. Box 334,

Bolivar, MO 65613.

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Tribute Wall



“ *Howard Bassett*

October 05, 2023 at 05:18 AM



“ *Howard Bassett*

January 26, 2023 at 04:15 PM



“ *So this might sound crazy but I would like to give my condolences to my GRANDFATHER whom I have never had the pleasure of meeting or knowing much of anything... I am the daughter of Tletia Laura Baxter (Gilbert) and Rachel Gilbert is my grandmother who has passed. I would love someone in the family to contact me to learn more! I never knew that my mother had any ther brothers or sisters and I believe my mother didn't either I am sorry for the loss but it looks like maybe it may bring a blessing*

Tatiana - March 09, 2015 at 12:00 AM