



Gerald "Gerry" Friedman

MAR 1, 1943 - JAN 11, 2025



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Gerry Friedman, 81, was born in Manchester, NH, to be near his parents (I always loved that line. BTW – Gerry wrote this obit to save his family the work when they are in deep mourning [they better be] and to be sure they get things right.) He attended McGill University where he obtained a B.Sc. During his university years he married Tarene (Catherine Smith) and had a wonderful son, Alan.

Gerry obtained a PhD in education and ecology from Cornell University. Before and during the time he was studying for the doctorate, Gerry worked on a dairy farm, taught in an independent school in Shaker Heights, Ohio and worked on a small farm of his own where they had many horses. He enjoyed working in the field, cutting wood, gardening for the table and freezer, and was possibly the only vice-president of a raccoon hunters club who had a PhD. Gerry stayed at Cornell as part of the education faculty and a member of the Cornell team developing a curriculum about waste treatment for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency. The curriculum, titled “Land Application of Waste,” was used by civil engineers and two Federal agencies, and resulted in a two-volume text by the same name. (Signed copies available.) Around 1979 Gerry left Cornell to teach science, mathematics and human sexuality (called “Sex with Gerry”) at the Alternative Community School (now the Lehman Alternative Community School) part of the Ithaca (NY) City School District. Five years later, after a marital separation and leaving his beloved farm, he began studying to be certified as a school administrator. He was then asked to develop an alternative school for TST BOCES (a public organization that provides shared programs to school districts) serving students at risk of dropping out of school. He started the TST Community School and remained principal of the school for twenty years. The school began with a few students. Twenty years later it had its own building with a middle and high school, a GED preparation program, and an integrated program for pregnant and/or parenting teens (with a licensed daycare). Gerry helped well over 1500 students, all headed for failure, all at-risk of dropping out of school, to complete their high school education. Gerry believed strongly in empowering students. He believed that teaching students how to have input in community decisions in school is the best preparation for real citizenship. He believed that showing students that they are worthy and capable and respected helps them



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gain the confidence to be successful. Most of them were. Not only was he proud that 75% of all students and 90% of the pregnant or parenting teens completed school, but also the experience gave him fodder for endless humorous stories. Students and staff always called him "Gerry." When outsiders commented that it showed a lack of respect by the students, Gerry indicated that respect is earned by what you do, not by what you are called. A most rewarding part of the school experience for Gerry, at both ACS and TST was the opportunity to work with outstanding teachers and staff who could laugh themselves silly at meetings after school—the best way to relieve stress. In 1991, Gerry met Sally Dutko, and her son, Dustin Corrente. Sally became and remains the love of his life. He also was one of the founding members of the Ithaca Reform Temple. He served as a board member for many years— as secretary, vice-president and president. Gerry loved to garden. He took great pride in his perennial and vegetable garden. A high point was winning a blue ribbon for the "Best Garlic Bulbs" at the Trumansburg (NY) County Fair. He still has the winning check (\$5.00) and blue ribbon hanging on the fridge. For years, Gerry grew about 600 heads of garlic and provided it to relatives and many friends. He sold home-made horseradish, pickles, and Doug and Gerry's Hot Sauce at the Ithaca Farmers Market and continued to prepare Gerry's Horseradish for friends and for the Fort Myers Community Free Synagogue's annual Seder. After they retired, Gerry and Sally moved to Pelican Preserve, a wonderful community in Fort Myers, Florida. Gerry then discovered pickleball and he became the president of his neighborhood Homeowners Association (HOA) for six years. Gerry and Sally continued to spend significant time visiting friends in Ithaca. He also looked forward to an annual visit to "the beach," Salisbury Beach, MA, to stay with lifelong friends, and enjoy fried whole-belly clams.

Above all Gerry was about family and friends, as were his parents, Ethel and Mike before him. He loved interacting with Alan and Marion and grandson Adam, with Dustin and Liz Corrente and grandchildren Emily and Michael, with his sister and brother-in-law, Linda Lee and Robert Baker, their kids and grandkids – niece Judy and nephew Jay and their spouses —and with too many friends to mention.

Gerry belonged to a driveway chat group which began during the Covid "lock-down" in 2020 and has continued meeting every morning. For some reason several in the group doubted his veracity when he talked about his experiences. So, just to reiterate them as a final word: he worked in a pharmacy, a sweater mill, a bottling factory, a distillery, and failed as a golf caddy. He was accused of trying to organize workers in a steel shop and got fired. He mowed golf greens, cooked in a restaurant, assisted a veterinarian, milked two different herds of cows, farmed hay and grain,



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owned, rode and drove several horses, cut and split wood, boarded up to 50 horses in the summer, and rock climbed in the Adirondacks, the Shawangunks, and Yosemite. He was predeceased by his dogs cats and horses: Laddie, Blackie, Major, DeeDe, Nookie, Ten, Robin, Malonie, Gabin, Gaston, Panty Hose and many others. A Celebration of Gerry's Life will be held at Pelican Preserve at a future date.



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Gerald "Gerry" by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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