



## William "Billy" Erwin

November 29, 1948 - April 12, 2021

William "Billy" Erwin, 72, of Clarion, passed away late Monday evening, April 12, 2021 at the Grove City Hospital. He was born in 1948 into some challenging circumstances, but he never asked why he wept for what could be. The odds you might say were stacked against him from the start, but that only matters if you play the odds. Billy, you see carried the greatest of all the trump cards. He inhaled life and exhaled infectious joyous energy. That energy would sear the hearts of everyone he encountered. This joy-filled treasure that embodied who he had become provided him the armor he needed to navigate years of institutional life and considerable social challenges. He mastered all the challenges with a shield of kindness and a sword of boundless curiosity. He was a teacher to those of us willing to learn the most powerful lessons, the lessons about ourselves. He was born in the city and several foster care providers were his parents into his early teen years. Growing up in the social system one is routinely confronted by hopeless spawning indignities that if unchallenged can impair your self-perception. His adolescence was marked by the social prescription of the day for persons with intellectual differences. He was unceremoniously shuffled off to the institution where he spent his teens and twenties. Painful stories of those first few decades of his life never left him, but they never consumed him or wilted his brilliant pedals. He endured institutional life as he endeared himself to caregivers and fellow residents. His work at Polk Center on the farm or in the nursery was a point of pride for him, but sadly the winds changed

again, and his valued roles were lost to other more tenable whims of the day. A transitional institution was the next card the system dealt him and he was really put to the test again. Marcy State hospital literally became his new haunt. Miraculously he kept his joyful and hopeful heart intact, the hospital however was closed under the dark clouds of mistreatment. He entered the state's group home system in Armstrong County late in the eighties and with his glow tarnished, but largely intact he took to the business of bringing the best out of people. Hundreds of staff people and neighbors over the years came into and out of his home and life. He infected them all with a dose of joy and gratitude for living. To say he was an incarnation of the mythical pied piper would be an understatement. The stars realigned for me when I met him while he was living in one of those group homes in Vandergrift, Pa. He moved to Clarion County early in the nineties bringing with him a serious record collection, enough textbooks to build an education on, and many duffels filled with curious treasures he had accumulated. He was a serious collector who was dedicated to the procurement of antiquities. He took up residence with our family in New Bethlehem where he soon became a celebrity. He never met someone he did not already know or at least someone who he was going to know very soon. He took a special interest in seeing to my education and the education of my children who now volumes of impactful stories and lessons from Billy have they have molded into tools of their own. His famous introductory line was routinely delivered with a zesty, heartfelt "I forgot your name I did" and the conversation always included a gleeful pronouncement "I like you I do". Inevitable the melting stranger would offer up a name and the budding relationship was off and so the teaching would begin. The lesson every time was the same "you can be a better version of yourself and I will show you how". He spent the last twenty years of his life in Clarion and his talent for leaving a powerful impression on those he encountered was with him to the end. He would want me to thank all the staff from UCIP, SAM, Passavant, and The Drop-in Center that supported him. He did not have many of the conventional things we all busy ourselves in pursuit of, but he had a

loving community of staff, family, and friends that are as numerous and diverse as any group that I have ever seen charmed by one person. He navigated this world without ego or pretense, he knew he was a gift to humanity, and he reminded us of that every day, in every interaction. Billy is survived by the Griffin Family, Timothy, Sharon, Elizabeth, Dana, Aubrey, Gabriel, Quill, Kalob, Ian, and Gavin, and his grandmother, Hoodie. In addition to his parents, Billy was preceded in death by his grandfather, Gene, and his brother, Jake. Family and friends will be received from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at the Robert V. Burns Funeral Home in Clarion with a Prayer Service to be held at 5:30 p.m. in the funeral home with Rev. Harold O. Jacobson, pastor of the Grace Lutheran Church in Clarion. Interment will take place in the Saint Charles Catholic Cemetery in New Bethlehem. "If you carry joy in your heart, you can heal any moment". Carlos Santana

# Cemetery Details

## Saint Charles Catholic Cemetery

New Bethlehem, PA 16242

# Previous Events

## Viewing

APR 20. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

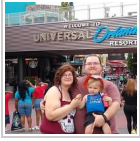
Robert V. Burns Funeral Home  
638 Wood Street  
Clarion, PA 16214  
(814) 226-6300  
<https://www.rvburnsfuneralhome.com>

## Service

APR 20. 5:30 PM (ET)

Robert V. Burns Funeral Home  
638 Wood Street  
Clarion, PA 16214  
(814) 226-6300  
<https://www.rvburnsfuneralhome.com>

# Tribute Wall



“ I had the privilege of getting to know and work with Billy years ago. He was someone who always treated you with a smile from across the room before making his way to you with a handshake or hug. He always made sure to never let anyone forget about a book that they were going to give to him especially of anyone who had College textbooks they were done with as they were a favorite of his. Billy, I know whoever you meet along the way you will bring a smile to their face. It's a lesson you taught along your journey. You will be missed buddy.

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**John Crain** - April 16, 2021 at 10:24 AM



“ European Sympathy Dish Garden was purchased for the family of William "Billy" Erwin.



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April 16, 2021 at 08:10 AM



“ Blue & White Sympathy Standing Spray was purchased for the family of William "Billy" Erwin.



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April 16, 2021 at 07:48 AM



“ *He was an amazing person. He and my daughter Brittany were good friends. He will truly be missed by many...*

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**Donna Rickard** - April 16, 2021 at 07:25 AM

RA

“ *I knew Billy for a long time, over 18 years. Every time I would see him, he would say, you got something for me Robert? I would always make sure I brought him something, probably explain why he had such a big collection of things. He loved text book and school books, he would sit for hours trying to copy words from the books saying, I am doing my homework. He had one of the biggest record collection I have ever seen. You ask him something and he could remember it, no matter if it was a person, tv show character, a place or an animal, he used to love to watch TV Westerns He could name ever tv western character. He also loved his Cowboy hats, and his walks around the town of Clarion and going to Goodwill, Showing off his animal impressions at ho well he can make the sounds of animals, he also loved to show everyone his spider that was on his wrist. RIP Billy make them laugh and guessing in heaven. Will miss you lots. Your friend Robert.*

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**Robert Anderson** - April 15, 2021 at 11:06 PM

FS

“ *From your friends at MHY Family Services. purchased the Fields of Europe for the family of William "Billy" Erwin.*



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**From your friends at MHY Family Services.** - April 15, 2021 at 11:55 AM

Ronni  
Minich

“ I met Billy while working at The Arc. His smile, personality, love for people, and positive words was contagious! He brightened the gloomiest of days! He will be forever remembered. My condolences and heartfelt sympathy to Bily's family and friends.



Ronni Minich - April 15, 2021 at 11:21 AM

SH

“ I never knew Billy, but know a lot of his family. What a wonderful obituary!

Shanelle Hawk - April 15, 2021 at 11:03 AM

JS

“ I worked with Billy for several years off and on and he was always a pleasure to be with . He always appreciated what you did for him and had that special smile. We will miss you Billy ,may you RIP Buddy . Jeanne Schreckengost UCIP

Jeanne Schreckengost - April 15, 2021 at 08:32 AM

LP

“ There are very few people you will run into during a lifetime that their memory will stay with you forever. Billy will be missed by everyone who knew him and loved him. The streets of Clarion will never be the same without him. I hope he continues to build with the lego blocks that he and I often played with while swapping funny stories. Billy had the wonderful capability of making everybody happy and make everybody smile. Perhaps, Billy will use those Legos to build us all the stairway to heaven. I know I will meet you again dear friend. Rest well. You deserve it. I will miss you and I love you. Thanks for the memories. Lisa P.

lisa plasan - April 14, 2021 at 09:37 PM

HS

“ I used to work with Billy when he lived with Tim and Sharon, and he was always the best part of my day. Every time I walked into the house he would squeeze my hair if it was in a bun, make me scratch his back, and tell me I was his friend. Billy was always good for a laugh. I’ll never forget when he told me he wanted to move in with the neighbors because “they had better snacks.” He will truly be missed beyond words. I love you my friend.  
Heather



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**Heather Shugats** - April 14, 2021 at 08:17 PM

PW

“ I always enjoyed talking to him and his enthusiasm for life. I will have fond memories of how he would tell us he liked music and us, and the red book bag he was hoping to get... May you all be comforted with the memories you had with Billy. You were all blessed to come into each other’s lives!

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**Patti West** - April 14, 2021 at 05:09 PM

HB

“ Billy was a man blessed with a happy face, happy heart and anytime I got to enjoy his company he was always the happiest person in my day! he will be sorely missed. Quite an addition to the Angels!!!!

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**Heidi Bauer** - April 14, 2021 at 03:26 PM