



# **Bernard Eugene Houfek**

SEP 25, 1946 - AUG 6, 2012



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8 00x600Normal0falsefalsefalseEN-USX-NONEX-NONEMicrosoftInternetExplorer4/\* Style Definitions \*/table.MsoNormalTable{mso-style-name:"Table Normal";mso-tstyle-rowband-size:0;mso-tstyle-colband-size:0;mso-style-noshow:yes;mso-style-priority:99;mso-style-parent:"";mso-padding-alt:0in 5.4pt 0in 5.4pt;mso-para-margin:0in;mso-para-margin-bottom:.0001pt;mso-pagination:widow-orphan;font-size:10.0pt;font-family:"Times New Roman",serif;}Early YearsBernie was born in Norfolk, Nebraska on September 25, 1946 and spent most of his young life in Schuyler, Nebraska. After dropping out of high school in his junior year, he went out to California to visit family with two of his closest friends. CareerOne day Bernie and his friends decided to see a Navy recruiter. All three joined the service and surprised everyone with that announcement. Having endured boot camp in California, Bernie became a Navy cook. After serving in the Navy, Bernie worked in some prestigious restaurants throughout the mid-west. He also performed other jobs in the food service industry including bar tending. Bernie’s signature dishes included spaghetti, goulash and meatloaf. When it came to liquid refreshment, his drinks of choice were Amaretto and coffee, gin and tonic or red beer (a blend of tomato juice and beer). His major profession in life was as a long haul truck driver.One of his pet peeves was bad car drivers. He especially disliked driving in the northeast – the roads there still echo with a few choice words from him. As a Veteran of the United States Navy, it was a natural transition to become a government contractor for KBR during Operation Iraqi Freedom from October 28, 2004 to November 1, 2005. It wasn’t coincidental that he served at the same time as one of his sons; went because Darin was serving his country. Bernie said, “I wouldn't ask him to do anything I wouldn't do.” Bernie made a lot of friends overseas with the Marines who traveled with the contractors for protection (he was not allowed to be armed) and communication. After the Battle of



Fallujah, Bernie's was the first contractor truck leading the convoy to bring supplies in. That night he slept in his truck and when he opened the door in the morning, there was a dead member of al-Qaeda or the Taliban right there! On December 22, 2005 a suicide bomber blew up the chow hall on the military's FOB, Forward Operating Base. Bernie's son Darin was only 15 feet away! Bernie knew that his son was at that location in Mosul and did everything in his power to find out if his son was okay – it took him twelve agonizing hours. Family Life Bernie fell in love three times and married Carolyn, Donna, and Trish. His independent spirit and 'stubborn as a bull' temperament contributed to three divorces. He liked to talk about anything, even the color of a wall. Extremely analytical and argumentative, one could never win a debate with him but just discover how to laugh in frustration. Over time he learned to agree to disagree instead of my way or the high way. Bernie didn't get to know his oldest son, Darnell until the boy was about 16 years old. Although it was very tough to do after such a long gap, Bernie reached out, got in touch with family and succeeded in bringing the two brothers together. Through this one act, Darnell and Darin learned the importance of family, sticking together and having each others back. He also showed them that looking after oneself is important in order to have the ability to look after others. Bernie's proudest life moments always involved his sons from the moment of their birth to graduation from high school and basic training. Horse Whisperer Bernie had a special relationship with dogs and it was common for him to take in strays. His favorite breed was the German shepherd. With horses, he had a gift – a true horse whisperer. He was involved with and loved horses all his life. When he owned a ranch, he raised and broke horses for people. Always the cowboy in his western hat, boots and blue jeans he did his part in various 4H and cattle groups. Sports Fan Bernie played football in high school and umpired softball for many years. He was a huge NASCAR fan. His favorite race car drivers were Dale Earnhardt, Sr., the Intimidator and Dale Earnhardt, Jr. He loved to reminisce about races – especially when Richard Petty flipped his car. A loyal Nebraska Cornhuskers fan, in the excitement of a game, he would chant with everyone, "Go Big Red!" Health Challenges As a young man, Bernie broke his neck playing football. Ironically one son did the same in 2006 while playing football.



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Keeping what seems like family tradition, his son Darin broke his neck after jumping into a shallow pool. You can imagine that Bernie's four year old grandson Collins is closely supervised! A broken neck did not stop Bernie for long. This man was a survivor of nine heart attacks and 8 stents over a twenty year period. Even after having a heart attack while in Iraq, he recovered and went back. Bernie felt a need to serve with the friends he had made and that he belonged in that role. Later on, although he wanted to return to do multiple tours, he was unable to pass the physical. PeaceBernie made his peace spiritually after a several hour conversation with a chaplain and passed away at the age of 65 in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.



## Tribute Wall

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**Anonymous** posted:

Dear Family, Losing a loved one can be devastating. However, please take comfort in knowing that death isn't the end. In fact, Jesus himself demonstrated that by what he did when his friend Lazarus died while he was still on earth. The account, whic Martye, Concerned Neighbor

August 8 at 11:33 AM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Bernard by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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