

Gary Wayne Bricker obituary

January 7th 1947 - August 22nd 2026



Gary Wayne Bricker passed peacefully in his sleep after a decades long battle with Parkinson's disease on August 22nd, 2026, with his family by his side. Gary was born to Dr. Earl Melvin Bricker Jr and Vera Louise Bricker on January 7th, 1947, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. After graduating first from Casady School and then the University of Oklahoma with a BA in French language, much to Earl and Louise's chagrin, he

"flew the coop" and landed in France. For two years he studied politics both at the Sorbonne and in the streets of a politically tense Paris. In May of 1968 he joined his French counterparts in a student rebellion that would quickly escalate into a nationwide protest. For his effort, the Gendarmerie gifted Gary with a 6-inch scar on his leg, the result of trying to protect his camera which held evidence of police abuse against protestors.

He returned to the United States with his mind open and his pockets empty. He taught French in New England boarding schools, eventually leading a class trip across Eastern Europe and into Moscow where he drank vodka from pop-top cans and perfected his signature mustache.

A life-long student of the world, Gary graduated Middlebury College with a MA in French in 1972 and then from Columbia University in 1975 where he studied economics and urban planning with a focus on West Africa. He joined the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 1976. In 1977, he met Lee Ellen Clyburn at a party. Ignoring the rest of the guests, the two spent the evening lost in conversation as Gary promised Lee a life of adventure of "faraway lands with names we can't pronounce." The two were married nine months later in 1977.

As if far away locales with unpronounceable names weren't enough, the two embarked on the adventure of parenthood when Carl Steven was born in 1980 followed shortly by Anna Louise in 1983.

Gary would go on to serve USAID for 27 years, with long-term assignments in Tunisia, Morocco, El Salvador, Somalia, Indonesia, the Republic of Georgia and Zambia. Without fail, each post would see Gary dive headlong into the language, the food, the music and the

culture that surrounded him. He worked on development projects that would genuinely change the lives of the communities he served, and he approached everyone he met with equal respect, regardless of their status in life. He retired from USAID in 2007 and dedicated his early retirement years to licensing cures for global diseases such as sickle cell anemia and malaria as a board member of the firm EpimedX.

Gary's personal life was as colorful as the Hawaiian shirts he wore nearly everyday. At the age of 40 he was licensed to SCUBA dive, completing hundreds of dives across Asia, Africa and Central America before hanging up his fins. He was an avid lover of art, mythology, history, philosophy and music. His record collection contained everything from Soviet protest marches to Indonesian gamelan orchestras to the "Divas" - Gloria, Mariah and Edith, of course. He was one part starched white oxford shirt, and one part brightly colored batik tunic. He was both CNN and South Park. He was as serious as he was silly.

Gary wrote poetry throughout his life, and later in his retirement self-published *Just Imagine* a life-poem that he began at the age of 33. From his poem *I Shall Be*:

I shall never again "be at home".

I shall be the visitor, bystander, voyeur,
a relativist nibbling appetizers at life's smorgasbord.

I shall join an ashram, monastery, synagogue, and madrasa to learn
"why are we here, where are we going"
and then never tell a soul.

Gary Wayne Bricker is survived by his wife, Lee Ellen Bricker, two children Carl Steven Bricker and Anna Louise Bricker, older brother Earl Melvin Bricker III, and younger sister Linda Suzanne Bricker.

Gary's life will be celebrated on August 29th, 2026 at 2:00 PM by the San Marcos Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, at the First Lutheran Church of San Marcos, 130 W Holland St, San Marcos, TX 78666. In lieu of flowers, the family is accepting donations to the San Marcos Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, <https://smuuf.org/giving/>