

Marvin Ross Weisbord

June 11, 1931 - March 19, 2025

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We are sad to announce the passing of Marvin Weisbord, who died peacefully on March 19, 2025 at the age of 93. Born June 11, 1931, Marv was a beloved husband, father, brother, grandfather, great-grandfather, uncle, cousin, dear friend, and mentor to countless others whose lives he touched through his wide ranging endeavors over a long and purposeful life.

Marv was a son of Philadelphia. He grew up in the Wynnefield section where he played basketball in the alleys and developed a lifelong love of learning and music. He attended Overbrook High School, excelling in academics and playing for the Police Athletic League championship basketball team.

His curiosity took him to the University of Arizona and later to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he earned his bachelor's degree and learned to fly planes. A born storyteller, Marv went on to study journalism, earning a Masters degree from the University of Iowa.

Shortly after graduation, Marv met his future wife, Dorothy Barclay, a college friend of sister Mimi. Marv and Dorothy shared over 68 years of marriage, devoted to each other and their family, raising four children together. Their

children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were enchanted by his music-making and the imaginary beasts and humorous tales Marv created for them.

Drafted into the Navy, Marv served as ship's journalist aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Valley Forge. Through words and pictures, he documented the challenging and dangerous work of his crewmates during the height of the Cold War. The skill and nerve of the Navy pilots deepened his fascination with flight. His time in the Navy imprinted on him the value of community and common purpose; themes he would later connect to his work on complex systems and human organizations.

In 1965, Marv came across an ad in the back of *The Saturday Review* and purchased a small, weathered hunting camp nestled in a meadow in Mount Holly, Vermont. There he often spent his days in a screen tent pitched beside the cabin, cranking out books and articles on his portable Smith-Corona, the keys clattering away at 120 words per minute. The camp, overlooking Lake Ninevah, captured his imagination and became the heart of family life. Three generations of children grew up exploring the trails, sailing on the lake, and eating Marv's special pancakes filled with freshly picked blueberries.

Marv's career journey was as diverse as his interests. He taught photojournalism at Penn State, worked in his family's printing business, and started a company that supplied tools for writers. In mid-career, he launched a management consulting practice based on the understanding that making work more meaningful and dignified boosts productivity and effectiveness. As a partner at Block Petrella Weisbord, he successfully applied this approach in hospitals, universities, government agencies, and Fortune 500 companies across North America and Europe.

Marv was celebrated in the organizational development field for his practical wisdom and unique ability to bring out the best in others. His book *Productive*

Workplaces: Organizing and Managing for Dignity, Meaning, and Community became a classic in the field, used as a textbook and reprinted many times, influencing generations of practitioners.

Later, Marv turned his attention to large-scale systems change. In collaboration with Sandra Janoff, he co-founded the Future Search Network, a global nonprofit helping organizations and communities engage in cooperative planning. This work took them to six continents, engaging some of the world's most challenging problems.

Marv wrote prolifically—authoring or co-authoring a dozen books and publishing countless articles on topics ranging from politics to parenting. Marv loved words, as a writer, a punster, and an avid game player. He was known to work on the New York Times crossword between turns during family Scrabble games.

Music was a lifelong pursuit and source of joy. Marv joked that he was still playing "oom-pah piano" into his 70s when he turned his serious attention to jazz. Out of Sunday jam sessions at his Wynnewood home grew a working ensemble that brought music to the Beaumont Retirement Community for the past ten years. He continued to perform with the band until just a short time before his death.

At Beaumont, Marv met Allan Tripp and embarked on a songwriting collaboration that resulted in an irresistible contemporary take on aging inspired by music of the classic American songbook. *The Senior Songbook* garnered media attention and landed them a spot on the Kelly Clarkson show as the "oldest living songwriting team." Reflecting on his musical journey, Marv wrote: "The full course lasts a lifetime—and nobody finishes."

Marv is survived by his wife, Dorothy; his children, Joe (Joyce), Nina (George), Bob (Dawn), Dano (Annie); eight grandchildren, Chloe (Jimmy) Isabel (Hunter) Carson, Lowell, Sylvie, John, Reid, and Meiyi; and three great-grandchildren, Areli, Otis, and Penelope. He was pre-deceased by his sister Mimi Weisbord and is survived by his sister Susan Newman; as well as many nieces, nephews, beloved family members and friends.

Family and friends are invited to a celebration of his life on Sunday April 6, 2025 at 1:00 PM at Beaumont at Bryn Mawr, Bryn Mawr PA. Instead of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in his memory to Farm & Wilderness Conservation using the following link: <https://farmandwildernessconservation.org/weisbord>.

May his memory be a blessing for all who knew and loved him.

Previous Events

Life Celebration

APR 6. 1:00 PM (ET)

Beaumont at Bryn Mawr
601 North Ithan Avenue
Bryn Mawr, PA

Tribute Wall

MT

“ Thank you, Marv. Your work, and especially Future Search, helped me to grow as a person and as an agent of meaningful change. Your work has helped to transform countless people, organizations and communities around the planet for the better. Your impact will continue to ramify for a very long time. I am blessed to have known you. Marc Tognotti

Marc Tognotti - April 26, 2025 at 12:10 AM

CH

“ Marv I consider as an important friend and mentor. His discerning insights into what makes organisations tick, what holds people together and how to structure the emergence of collective intelligence was unique and uncanny. But it was his humanity, his generosity, his ability to touch so many people simply , free of any guile, making us fee that he genuinely cared about each of us . I have never met anyone who listened as deeply and sincerely as Marv, or who practised empathy as genuinely. His insights and encouragement helped me immensely to stay the course as an independent service provider. I will cherish everything he left me, and can't believe that he is not learning and enjoying something new at this very moment. Christopher Schoch

Chris - March 31, 2025 at 05:20 PM

NS

“ Oh, how grateful I am for dear Marv. First, his writing opened up my world as I studied Organizational Development then when I wrote to him to thank him for inspiring my true self to shine as a consultant, he wrote back. We met in person and then occasionally had jam sessions with me singing and he on piano...even at my post graduation party! Oh, Marv, I love you. Rest in joyful peace. ~ Niyonu

NIYONU SPANN - March 24, 2025 at 09:27 AM

YU

“ Yolanda Smith- Tufts University planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Marvin Ross Weisbord.

Yolanda Smith- Tufts University - March 24, 2025 at 07:29 AM

YU

“ Yolanda Smith- Tufts University purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Marvin Ross Weisbord.



Yolanda Smith- Tufts University - March 24, 2025 at 07:29 AM

DK

“*Marvin was my Dad's best friend since college. I always loved it when our family visited the Weisbords or they visited us! He and Dorothy were like aunt and uncle to me and my brother, and their kids like cousins to us. I always loved his smile, his voice, his sweet manner, his piano playing, and talking with him about all kinds of things. What a mind! The last time I got to visit with him was in 2016 when I took my Mom (Sylvia) to visit him and Dorothy after my Dad (Lee Miller) died. I will miss dear Marvin and look forward to seeing everyone at the memorial.*

*Love,
Danna*

Danna Katzman - March 23, 2025 at 10:07 PM

JT

“*We lived two houses away from Marv and Dottie Weisbord on Glenwood Road in Merion in the 1960's. I used to play with their kids, Joey, Nina and Bobby (Danny was too young) and Mr. Weisbord was always a friendly neighbor and they used to, at times, host hoot-n-annies at their home and even us kids were invited. I recall live music, singing and free food, which was for the kids the big attraction. I recall him walking to the train station at Merion every work day. I remember I asked him for some writing tips when i was still in grade school or middle school as I knew him to be a writer and an accomplished wordsmith. He was very gracious with his time and taught me some things to improve my writing. What a wonderful gentleman. I am glad I knew him and the entire family.*

*Jack T. Tomarchio
former neighbor at 125 Glenwood Road*

Jack Tomarchio - March 23, 2025 at 03:42 PM

LA

“ I have many wonderful memories of time with Marv. He is a constant inspiration to me, he provided enormous learning, and gave me advice that changed my life for the better. I will miss him greatly, but know that my experience is also the experience of him with so many others. The world is a better place because of Marv.

Laurence Akiyoshi - March 23, 2025 at 10:58 AM

FB

“ What a sweet man. He loved helping people. I remember at one conference we played duo-jazz piano for hours, late into the night. (What are the odds of finding two pianos next to each other at a conference facility?) Thank you Marv for sharing your wisdom and joy in living.

Frank Barrett - March 22, 2025 at 04:32 PM

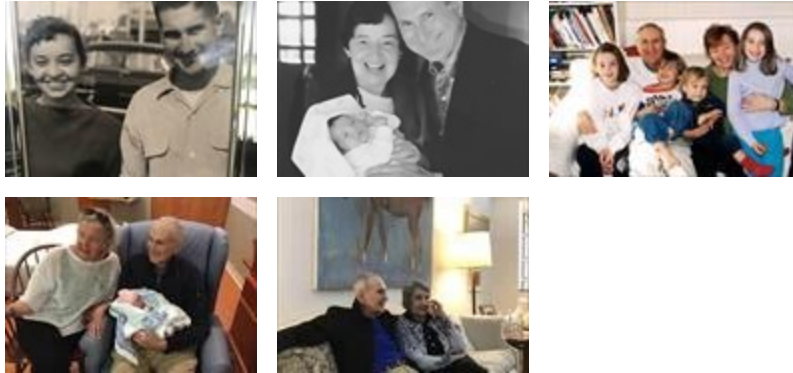
ML

“ So so many memories - the Lane family and Weisbord family has been lovingly intertwined for many years!! And of course one of the fondest memories is Marv sitting down at the piano (whether it was tuned or not!) and playing requested favorites! You are loved and missed - Maggie

Maggie Lane - March 22, 2025 at 12:55 PM

IP

“ 11 files added to the tribute wall



Isabel Pawloff - March 22, 2025 at 12:44 PM

NS

Oh, how grateful I am for dear Marv. First, his writing opened up my world as I studied Organizaton Development then when I wrote to him to thank him for inspiring my true self to shine as a consultant, he wrote back. We met in person and then occasionally had jam sessions with me singing and he on piano...even at my post graduation party! Oh, Marv, I love you. Rest in joyful peace.

NIYONU SPANN - March 23, 2025 at 04:28 PM

CE

Bravo Marvin Weisbord for a life well lived. It was obvious that he had what Einstein referred to as “holy curiosity”. He shaped the lives of his family, friends, students and all those he touched with his humor, warmth and insight. I wish I knew him better, but it’s not always the length of time that we know one another; rather, it’s the quality of that time. Chuck Crowley, New York.

Charles L. Crowley, Esq. - March 24, 2025 at 10:55 PM

JH

*I so valued Marv's wisdom, insight, and his ability to make complex issues understandable and even exciting. I mostly remember his parties---and I never wanted to miss them---and singing with him at the piano. It never mattered that I couldn't carry a tune, he always welcomed my singing. And I was so pleased to be able to pass his book, *Productive Workplaces*, on to my grandson. What a legacy. Rest in peace, Marv.*

Jean Haskell, Philadelphia

Jean Haskell - March 25, 2025 at 09:38 PM

JB

An exceptional man who so freely shared his insights and amazing thinking, touching so many individuals, groups and organizations. He made a profound impact on the field of organization development over the years, later enhanced by his exceptional contribution to large group methods and interventions through the Future Search and its network that has touched so many people. I feel very fortunate to have been able to work with Marv and Sandra on a Future Search in Geneva - what a duo they were.

A beautiful and talented man and a fine piano player. Go well Marv and thank you for being you and all you did.

Joanne Burke - March 26, 2025 at 04:23 PM

PT

What a beautiful man! I learned so much from him, and Sandra, and loved the community he created. The parties and music at his house were the best. I'm glad to have known him, his work. What a difference he made in the world. His memory is for a blessing.

Pamela Tudor - March 31, 2025 at 12:04 PM