



Dr. Barry F. Beck Obituary

October 18, 1944 - November 28, 2011

Dr. Barry F. Beck passed away November 28, 2011, at the age of 67 after a series of strokes left him debilitated with "Locked-in syndrome" for over the past 2 years.

Born in Hershey, PA to father, Daniel Beck, and mother, Verna Beck, Barry was raised almost entirely in a lower class setting in Rochester, NY. Paving his own path to success, Barry first obtained his Bachelor's degree in geology at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and then followed with his Master's and Ph.D. degrees in geology from Rice University in Houston, TX. Barry's intrigue in caves led him to Puerto Rico to work for the Department of Natural Resources in which he conducted investigations in tropical karst, researched caves on the island, as well as hosted expeditions for cavers exploring Puerto Rico.

He then made his move to Georgia, first working for the GA Dept of Natural Resources in Atlanta, and then as professor of geology at Georgia Southwestern College, in Americus, GA. At Georgia Southwestern he led many caving expeditions with students, one which is featured on the Weather Channel's "Storm Stories" in which he and his group are trapped in a cave overnight after extensive flooding and he leads them all to a safe escape.

Americus, GA is also where he met his second wife and love of his life, Dr. Penny Lukin,

They soon moved to Orlando, FL together where Barry became the first, and only, Director of Florida Sinkhole Research Institute at the University of Central Florida. There Barry conducted karst research, studying caves and sinkholes, as well as establishing the series of international multidisciplinary sinkhole conferences, which are still being held to this day.

Eventually the closing of the Sinkhole Institute brought Barry and his family to Oak Ridge, TN where he joined P.E. Lamoreaux & Associates, Inc. and directed their Oak Ridge branch for the next 18 years. In 2004, The NSS (National Speleological Society), presented Barry with their highest award, Honorary Membership, for his lifetime of contributions and study of speleology and karst.

In addition to his professional endeavors, Barry was an incredibly active, energetic and passionate individual, biking or running on almost a daily basis, and an avid hiker and tennis player as well. Barry and Penny shared a passion for dancing, through participating in classes and groups of every caliber, specifically clogging and various forms of folk dancing in which Barry even at one time held the position of President of the Muckalee Mudstompers, the Americus, GA clogging group. Barry also loved to explore the world through travel, travelling through business and adventure, bringing family to countries all over from countries like Guam all the way to Russia and to Argentina.

After his brain stem stroke in 2009 left him in a very uniquely debilitated state, known as "Locked-in Syndrome", Barry opted to participate in brain-computer interface research with Dr. Eric Sellers from the psychology dept of East TN State University Barry was one of the first people in the world with a brain stem stroke to use this form of communication.

Overwhelming gratitude is sent out to all the staff of Harriman Care and Rehabilitation for their compassionate care over the past two years, Dr. Eric Sellers for his committed research, Dr. Jeffrey Hecht of UT Medical Center, and all the friends and family that supported Barry and his family throughout his illness.

Barry is survived by his eternally loving and grateful family: Penny, wife of 32 years; children; son, Erik, his wife Jill, and grandchildren Coty and Kelly, of Americus, GA; daughter, Jenny, of San Antonio, TX; son, Hans, his wife Angela Marsico, and granddaughter, Sophia Marsico-Beck of Hendersonville, NC; daughter Sonja, of San Francisco, CA; and son Daniel, currently of Asheville, NC.

The funeral will be at 2 PM on Wednesday, November 30, 2011, at Martin Oak Ridge Funeral Home. A graveside service will follow.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorials be made to a charity of your choice or one of Barry's favorite charities: The Nature Conservancy, the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge, Oak Ridge Civic Music Association, and The East Tennessee State University Fund.

Comments



“ Reading Barry's story in NPR warmed my heart. What a courageous walk, to strive for communication even through the most debilitating illness. I'm sure he knew that his participation would benefit others for years to come. An amazing man, with an amazing family. Prayers for all of you, as I'm sure he is dearly missed.

Wendy Pitts, BSN, RN, CCM - Shorewood, IL - Friend - October 28, 2014 at 12:00 AM



“ I'm going thru a difficult time in my life,. I do not own a television set, but while Cat sitting for a friend and watching her television, I had the opportunity to watch "Storm Stories" in which Dr. Berry Beck is featured.
I'm a survivor of many unpleasant and challenging situations, however, and this far... (And only in terms of my safety), it has not reached the point of it being life threatening.

I'm encouraged by the story and the courage to survive, I've had to live "cave" style" due to economic challenges I have not figured out how to get out of...but after seeing Dr. Beck's incredible story....I'm not afraid.

Thank You Dr. Beck, and God bless.

patty y. arquette - Topanga,, CA - none - March 05, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ I worked for Barry at PELA in Oak Ridge before going back to school to earn my MA. I loved working for and with him and I am so grateful to have known him. The world is better for him having been in it, but he's gone too soon.

Felicity Pearson - Minneapolis, MN - January 30, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ Dear Penny and Family,

My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family as you've suffered the loss of Barry. I am the fiddler friend from the Scottish Music Club.

I know the holidays are very hard when you've recently had a death in the family, and I'll be lifting you all up in prayer during these hard times.

Barry is dancing in Heaven now.

Conny Ottway

Conny Ottway - Knoxville, TN - Friend - December 10, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Penny, I am so sorry to hear of the loss of your husband. My best to you and your family at this difficult time.

Mary E. Donovan - Knoxville & Tokyo, TN - from Scottish Music Club - December 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Dear Penny and family - very sorry to hear about Barry's passing. Although I never had a chance to meet him, it sounds like he led a wonderful and fun life.

Tim Bigelow - Oak Ridge, TN - December 02, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Dr. Beck greatly influenced my decision to become a Geologist and steered me in the right direction as my undergraduate advisor. Switching from English after three years to Geology, Barry quickly made it clear that most Geologists didn't really care about ole Billy Shakespeare! Attending grad school at USF, I very much enjoyed working with Barry in building the sinkhole databases from scratch at the FSRI. He was very outgoing, a lot of fun, extremely intelligent and very conscientious. I will greatly miss him. Penny, I pray that the Lord surrounds you and the family with his wonderful presence and comforting grace.

Jim Littlefield, Jr. - Americus, GA - December 01, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Please know that my thoughts are with you, Penny, and your family at this sad time.

Alice Wershing - December 01, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ known only a short time.Had fun at Han's wedding with Barry .large loss to his children and wife

Richard Hanken - Americus, GA - December 01, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Our thoughts and prayers are with Dr Beck's family in this sad season. We didn't know him personally, but knew of him and his work in karst areas through the National Speleological Society and southeastern geological associations. He was greatly admired for his work and contributions to the study of speleology.

Robert E & Anne Whittemore - Johnson City, TN - December 01, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ I'm sorry to hear of Barry's passing. Though we never met, his name and work have been important to me as a Florida PG. Please add me to the long list of folks whose lives were touched. Barry's family is in my thoughts.

Monica Fowler - NE - November 30, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Dr. Beck will be remembered forever as a dedicated co-worker, a caring friend, and a great mentor.

Wanfang Zhou - November 30, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Barry and I worked at the Georgia Geologic Survey together. I always admired his level of energy and enthusiasm. Barry may not have invented multi-tasking, but he certainly carried it to advanced levels. I'm sure he will be missed.

Tom Watson - Avondale Estates, GA - colleague, friend - November 29, 2011 at 12:00 AM