



## Ben W. Bendel

August 30, 1943 - June 9, 2021

Ben passed away on June 9, 2021 at home, surrounded by family, after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

He was born in Prague Czechoslovakia to Karl Hans Bendel and Hildegard (Heidi) Anna Bendel. His father was serving on the Russian front until he was taken as a POW. His mother was a nurse in a German hospital, and at age 2, he walked with his mother 120+ miles from Czechoslovakia to Leipzig, Germany to escape warfare. After the war his childhood memories in Germany included explorations with his brother in the forest and in a shot down American bomber near their home in Putzbrunn. His family later relocated to Haar where they lived across the street from the Belg brothers and developed many more fond childhood memories. In 1957, his mother, father, and brother Michael sold everything except what they could each carry in a small suitcase and a wooden crate and took a train to Hamburg, Germany, and then boarded a boat (Liberty ship) to the United States to escape another war. Settling with sponsors in Los Angeles, California Ben only spoke German, had to attend school and assimilate quickly. Overcoming many obstacles, he earned his U.S citizenship status at age 18 and was proud to be an American.

In 1959 he moved to San Jose, California, and graduated from Camden High School, attended Foothill Junior College, and California State Polytechnic

University, San Louis Obispo where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering. Among his many distinguished career and lifetime achievements were:

- Awarded scholarships in water polo, swimming and wrestling;
- Camp counselor (Bob Mathias Sierra Boys & Girls Camp) and coaching youth sports;
- 4-years of honorable service with the US Marine Corps;
- 25 years in the power and public utilities sector and another 15 in the pest control industry;
- Active memberships in the Pacific Coast Gas and Electric Associations
- Service on Boards of Directors for Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, Sacramento Junior Achievement, and East Sacramento Rotary Club;
- Service as first Vice Chairman of the Sacramento Area Chapter of the American Red Cross;
- 35+ years of service to the California Indian Manpower Consortium (CIMC), as a former Chairman of its Private Industry Council and volunteer.

His hobbies included skiing (water and snow), hunting, fishing, camping, diving, running, and travel until his health prevented him from doing so. He felt fortunate to have been able to travel to Germany after 50 years and reunite with his childhood friend Dietmar Belg. His passions were landscaping, gardening and spending time with his grandchildren. His obsession was “making wood”, which coined by his mother meant splitting and stacking wood in preparation for the winter months.

Ben is survived by his wife Michele Robinson-Bendel; his three sons Brian Bendel (Kerry), Sean Robinson (Michelle), Ryan Robinson; four granddaughters, Taylor and Kaden Bendel, and Alyssa and Harper Robinson; his brother Michael Bendel (Barbara), and other numerous extended family and friends.

Ben, a phenomenal human being, had a profound impact on the lives of many, and in leaving this world a better place he will be missed immensely.

In accord with his wishes there will be no funeral services or additional fanfare. The family would like to thank the staff with Kaiser's oncology, ICU, palliative and hospice care units, and Snowline Hospice for their compassionate care.

# Tribute Wall

BB

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Brian Bendel** - June 27, 2021 at 09:58 AM

MR

“ Papa Ben with his girls.



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**Michelle Robinson** - June 26, 2021 at 01:42 PM

CT

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Ctomcin** - June 25, 2021 at 02:16 PM

CT

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Ctomcin** - June 25, 2021 at 02:15 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Ctomcin** - June 25, 2021 at 02:14 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Ctomcin** - June 25, 2021 at 02:13 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Ctomcin** - June 25, 2021 at 02:12 PM

CT

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Ctomcin** - June 25, 2021 at 01:58 PM

“ Post on Behalf of Bob Buccola, Post 2:

*I remember once hearing my son (when he was about a freshman or sophomore in high school) comment with words to the effect, “Ben sure isn’t very fun to work with, is he Dad?” First, that observation was absolutely incorrect, yet I understood my son’s misunderstanding, because he wasn’t used to seeing a job tackled as though time and efficiency really mattered. With Ben, there was always a sense of urgency to whatever he would do. It reminded me so much of working with my father, which I did about every weekend growing up. What my son Nick couldn’t see, were the number of times that Ben and I would chuckle, or even get an outright kick out of in life, when working together or even discussing current affairs. Ben was always kind, warm and had a great sense of humor about everything. You just had to get past the veneer.*

*There was really nothing I could ever ask of Ben that he wouldn’t do. No matter what the task, whether it be taking on a tricky project or something as basic as checking on my elderly parents, there was no one, and I mean no one, more dependable and willing to help those in need more than Ben. He did so many things for others, without ever expecting praise or any expressed level of gratitude. He did those extra things because, to him, they were the right thing to do. He had one of the kindest hearts that I have ever known.*

*I recall that about 15 years ago, I asked Ben to refrain from using ladders that involved any substantial work off the ground. I profoundly was concerned about his safety. In response, because he would never lie, yet he wouldn’t really respond to me, but would just smile when I would plead with him not to do ladder work. Of course, I knew what that meant. It meant that as I would drive away, that he would be up on an extension ladder cleaning gutters or putting up Christmas lights 15 to 20 feet above the ground. So finally, about 5 or 6 years ago, I begged him to please stop doing the work of a young man. I told him that we had Bobby (who works like a beast and is as strong as a bull) and other professional*

*contractors that could take over doing the risky roofline work. In fact, I told him that if he couldn't meet my wishes, then I couldn't in good conscience continue going forward with the working part of our relationship. It was that serious to me. His response was true to form. Instead of recognizing all of his remaining incredible talents and many contributions, he told me that if he didn't do everything, that he wouldn't feel as though he was contributing enough or that I was getting my money's worth with him. Truth was, Ben was doing more to make my life and lives of my family members easier, than anyone whom I have ever met. Yet from Ben's perspective, as a true giver, he considered this minor modification to what he was doing for me as a failure of sorts. Again, this is because Ben has always been someone who asks himself if he is doing enough for others, without any expectation of ever receiving the same sense of commitment from others in return.*

*Ben was so proud of his family and always bragged that he wasn't the hardest worker or smartest person in his house, as those honors were reserved for his beloved Michele. He adored his family.*

*It is hard to imagine that life somehow just ticks along without Ben in it. For me, it was how he lived his life by example, his wonderful intellect and flawless memory, his warm smile, his common sense, and his deep sense of loyalty that not only I, but those who knew him, will always remember and miss.*

*Ben, thank you for living your life and teaching by example, the special character traits that most of us just read about. We will all love and miss you into eternity...*

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**Ctomcin** - June 25, 2021 at 01:49 PM

“ Post on Behalf of Bob Buccola, Post 1:

*I first met Ben about 25 years ago. At the time, he was working part-time for a pest exterminator that I trusted and got to know over time. I was telling the owner of the company how much I would like to have a professional and highly competent property caretaker, to address the very many challenging issues attendant to my Fair Oaks home. A home that was initially built in the 1920s. I needed someone who knew a lot about the trades, including overall construction. My property has very challenging, yet potentially beautiful topography, and in total is considerably over two acres.*

*I was told that “Ben” was interested in potentially taking on the task, and that he was generally familiar with my property through the extermination work that he had done there. He was reportedly hardworking, smart and very honest. I recall being told words to the effect that, “You better first meet Ben and really see if he is what you’re looking for.” When I asked whether or not I should have any cause for concern, I was told that he’s a great person but a tough cookie, who can be all business – a person who doesn’t pussyfoot around.*

*The minute I met Ben I had a sense that two things were true. First, that he didn’t like nonsense, and next, that he was unwilling to make representations that he couldn’t fulfill. For example, when I asked him to give me a prediction on the amount of hours that would be required to really get the property looking great, he told me he couldn’t do so. He said that if he tried that he’d be guessing, and that he doesn’t like to guess. He was very firm about this. I thought this was interesting, as most people speak first and think later. Quite firmly he made clear that he was not in the business of making promises that he couldn’t make good on. He said that if I need to have an estimate in advance, that I should probably find someone else. So it became immediately clear to me that Ben was going to be my boss, not the other way around.*

*I remember marveling over watching how hard and efficient he was with everything he did. He would routinely get whatever he might need at the hardware store on his way over, so as to avoid any interruptions in his day. I honestly don't believe that I ever saw Ben take a break while he was taking on the many tasks that may require the expertise of a plumber, an electrician, a carpenter, an exterminator – you name it. Ben understood it all, and had a keen sense for when a tradesman was trying to sell him a bill of goods. No one could get over on Ben.*

*Ben really did it all and would never take shortcuts. There was only one way to take on a task, and it was the right way. Ben's way. I used to smile inside when helping Ben with a project. We would quibble back and forth over the way to handle it, but the truth is, he was almost always right.*

*Far beyond Ben's commitment to working hard and his great aptitude for so many things, was his remarkable strength of character. His integrity, to include his willingness to take responsibility for anything that didn't go perfectly while on his watch, was inspirational. He was quick to own any error on his part, not a common trait these days. And he was seldom wrong about anything. His consistent demonstration of character was a teaching tool for anyone that knew Ben.*

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**Ctomcin** - June 25, 2021 at 01:47 PM

CT

“ Posted on Behalf of Skip Ryman:

*Your Father, brother, husband and friend together with an ornamental horticulture major (Jeremy Wells), an architectural engineering major ( ? Wilson) and myself shared an off campus dormitory and several apartments over the course of three years at Cal Poly SLO. Ben (Benny as I knew him and was told is the actual name he chose when he came to the US) and I became best friends. When invited I would spend occasional weekends with his family in San Jose. We would spend time in Santa Cruz where, like at Pismo, Avala, Morro Bay and other beaches he would frustrate himself trying to teach this “slow twitch muscled” Alaskan how to surf and water ski. He did manage to talk me into getting on the high board at Poly’s pool where I thankfully did learn to pike before hitting the water.*

*I managed to meet his parents during my visits to their home. They broke the mold when they made his Mother. The personification of true European grace and tolerance she managed to school this somewhat socially awkward back woods Alaskan how to identify and use a variety of eating utensils. After our long drive from SLO to SJC we would arrive late at night to find a table graced with a pot of hot tea, a half pint of Bacardi, a small loaf of sliced home baked black bread and a large plate of her amazing steak tar tar. Although I didn’t read about it in Benny’s obituary, his Mother told me stories about the horrors of the fire bombings in Dresden. How she and her children sought refuge in the river and dove into the water to avoid the strafing from the fighter escorts. Benny’s father worked odd and sometimes late hours and I saw little of him but one memory persists. We were watching a half hour TV show popular at the time “Combat”. The show rather insensitively portrayed German soldiers as incompetent “carnival targets”. Benny’s dad was furious and left the room. He was a man who I perceived knew combat and who respected and appreciated the bonds between soldiers regardless of politics.*

*My father was retired Coast guard. He was a registered big game guide and bush pilot. Together with my Mother they owned and*

*operated a lodge and multi aircraft flying service. Benny spent a summer working for my parents and earning money for college. We didn't do a great deal of work but my parents were tolerant people and allowed us free rein to enjoy and experience Alaska. We had a casual relationship with two local girls and one warm day my father flew the four of us to his camp on the Italio River. It was high tide and the beach strip we normally used was flooded and not usable. He deposited us on the far side of the river two miles from the camp and left us to our own devices to get there. We found an abandoned skiff with a rotting, leaky bottom and two boards to use as paddles. We managed to cross the river alive and proceeded to walk through the large sand dune system to the camp. The girls were lagging behind picking wild strawberries when Benny and I crested a large dune and ran face to face into a huge sow grizzly and her three cubs. She charged up the dune toward us but stopped when the girls came into view and returned to her cubs. We finally arrived at the cabin, secured one of the canoes and paddled upriver to the site of an abandoned 19th century native village. On our return, the girls purposely capsized the canoe in what they thought was shallow water....it was not....Again we survived, dried out in the warm sun, ate wild strawberries until we couldn't and Dad flew us home that evening. We didn't see much of our dates after that day and assumed their sense of self-preservation probably led to the avoidance. Multiple attempts to reconnect through weddings, moose hunts and birthday parties never worked out. So, my memories of Benny are those of a great friend in the prime of youth. While I regret not getting together, especially at this time, I am more than pleased with that memory.*

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Ctomcin - June 25, 2021 at 01:18 PM

DB

“ *It's impossible to put into words just how large the void will be without Ben in our lives. He has been a part of the Buccola family for decades. The memory of Ben's big heart, his loyalty, and how much he cared about our family (including our dogs) will be in our hearts forever. I bet Bella and Blu (with their tails wagging) were waiting to greet Ben when he arrived in heaven.*

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**Diane Buccola** - June 23, 2021 at 07:22 PM

BM

“ *Ben was as gracious a person as I have ever met. His zest for life and his love for his family was evident in every encounter I had with him.*  
*Our lives will not be the same without his smiling face and always cheerful attitude.*  
*Diana and I will miss putting out Gold Chocolate Coins for him to enjoy when he dropped by.*  
*I will smile as I remember Ben, as I am sure everyone who knew him will.*

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**Bob McMahon** - June 23, 2021 at 01:04 PM

ES

“ *Erna Smith lit a candle in memory of Ben W. Bendel*



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**Erna Smith** - June 19, 2021 at 01:01 PM

ES

*I enjoyed working with Ben on many projects for CIMC and getting an opportunity to meet his wife and share dinners and lunch with them. Will miss his beautiful smile.*

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**Erna Smith** - June 19, 2021 at 01:12 PM

EL

“ I got to meet Ben on a trip with Brian. Ben was a gracious host. His love of life was obvious. It was great feeling the happiness he carried himself with and shared with others. Glad I had a chance to connect with him more than once. He will be missed. Eric

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**Eric Lavigne** - June 18, 2021 at 10:59 AM

BB

“ And I am never late to any predetermined time and place...ever!  
Thanks Dad.

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**Brian Bendel** - June 16, 2021 at 11:40 PM

BB

“ Love you Dad



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**Brian Bendel** - June 16, 2021 at 11:18 PM

DB



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**Diane Buccola** - June 23, 2021 at 07:23 PM

BB

“ Being I've known my Dad my entire time here on Earth, I have way too many stories to share in this forum. All I have to say is I grew up with a super hero as a father when I was young and only understood my need for pickled things, raw carrots, hot food, taking risks, enjoying a good laugh, and responsibility for one's own choices and actions later in life. I learned through his struggles about how to become a merchant of kindness and willingness to share one's self. Don't kid yourself...you might think he was helping you but in fact you were helping him. I know he is waking up in a log shelter by a river with frost on his stash with a big smile because I dared him he wouldn't sleep in it overnight in cold temps (inside joke) and he proved me wrong.

Love you Dad.

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**Brian Bendel** - June 16, 2021 at 11:09 PM

BC

“ I met Ben at age 13 almost 20 years ago, and though we're not related by blood, we might as well have been. He was like a father to me, and also a great friend. The time he invested in teaching me and helping me build a work ethic lead me to start my own landscaping business and become self sustainable. He always told me how proud he was of me and that meant the world. Not a day will go by that Ben does not live on through me and others who knew and loved him. Prost mein freund 🍺 🙌 🙌 🙌

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**Bobby Cox** - June 16, 2021 at 09:59 PM

TA

“ *Deepest condolences just a fantastic person  
with the warmest smile ever will be truly  
Missed*



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**Tanya** - June 16, 2021 at 12:17 PM