

[This is a compilation of a posting at <http://WhiteDog.typepad.com>, and posts at an online memorial page at the DenverPost.com, which has since been removed.]



~~~ Papa Bear ~~~  
~ October 16, 1927 ~ October 22, 2003 ~

Papa-Bear, as head of the intertribal Bear Clan, was a spiritual leader to over 3,000 American Indians and through the 'making-of-relatives' ceremony was the grandfather, father and brother to over 150 people in the 'non-indian' Bear Clan.

Many more people around the world knew Papa-Bear as either a Colorado Division of Wildlife Hunter Education instructor, or through his school, the Wilderness Institute of Survival Education (W.I.S.E.)

Papa-Bear helped to pass the law requiring hunter education classes in Colorado, and taught over 18,000 students since then. As a cold-weather travel safety and survival instructor, thousands more have learned safe highway and backcountry travel practices.

As an active researcher in backcountry search and rescue techniques since the 1950's he helped develop many procedures that are now standard practice in search and rescue.

Papa-Bear passed away on Wednesday October 22, 2003 at 11:30a.m. Mountain Time at his home near Denver, Colorado.

Instead of flowers Papa-Bear would appreciate donations to *Larimer County Search & Rescue*, the *Colorado Division of Wildlife - The Wildlife Management Education Fund* or volunteer with the Colorado Division of *Wildlife Volunteer Program*.

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*[The following comments were left in an online memorial page  
at the DenverPost.com site in the days after October 22, 2003.]*

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I have been proud to travel part of this Red Road of Life with you. We may not have had very much time together, but it was phenomenal!

*Beverly Pelle (Denver, CO)*

*October 24, 2003*

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May all that you have touched remember the kindness, gentleness and love as your spirit walks with us that remain

*Jeff Warner (Des Moines, IA)*

*October 24, 2003*

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Papa will always have a special place in my heart. He will be greatly missed.

*Connie Olson (Highlands Ranch, CO)*

*October 24, 2003*

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Dear Karen, Papa Bear's family, 'Bear Clan' and circle of friends.....

Our deepest sympathy and condolences goes out to all of Papa Bear's family and friends.

We are deeply saddened by the loss of Papa Bear and by the pain felt by all at his passing, but want each of you to know that you are in our thoughts and prayers.

We are so sorry for your precious loss; there are just no words to express how we feel. Please let us know how we can be of help to your family in whatever way you need.

I'm sure Papa Bear is very proud knowing we are trying to be so strong at one of hardest times a person has to go through. We'll miss him.

It is at times like this when God does give you the strength to go thru all the heartaches. We pray that God will walk with all of you during this difficult time and that you will draw strength and peace from the resources of your faith. May you come to feel that peace.....of God's.....which surpasses all understanding.

Our heartfelt thoughts, deepest sympathy and our prayers are with your family and friends.....May God give you comfort, strength and peace and may He bless and love all of you at this time.

*Judith Miller and Barry Tagart*

Golden, Colorado

October 24, 2003

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Papa Bear was best known as a Master Hunter Education Instructor, an International Survival Consultant and Intertribal Bear Clan Leader.

He was a husband and a father.....and a friend to many.....

My heart dropped when I received the news. His spirit crossed over Wednesday, October 22, 2003. Papa Bear is home at last.....

I just wanted to add to the love for Papa Bear. I am heart-broken to have lost my best friend. I am very sorry for the loss of such a wonderful man. He has touched so many lives and will be missed.

It's really not too strange.....to those of you who understand and believe.....but I feel strongly that I experienced Papa Bear reaching out to me on that morning as he crossed over. On that morning I had been thinking of Papa Bear.....and how I had forgotten to call him on his birthday the week before, I felt guilty and miserable for that. I thought I would send a belated birthday e-card greeting that afternoon from Barry and myself, so I put it aside to do for later when Barry would be home. At the same time, miles away while at work, Barry also had experienced a similar feeling.....as he was thinking of Papa Bear that morning, he had just received the o.k. from the human resource department to hold a survival class for his co-workers.

These thoughts came to both of us around the same time that Papa Bear was crossing over. Did he reach out.....? was he with us.....? did his spirit touch us.....? I believe he did.....I believe that he had gently wrapped his arms around the two of us..... one more time..... to say goodbye.....

There were many times throughout the years that I had dreams.....or were they 'visions'? in which Papa Bear would 'visit' with me. He was always in this meadow surrounded by beautiful multicolored flowers and there were snow-capped mountains in the background. His lodge home could be seen nestled near a stand of trees with his totem off to one side. He was always dressed in his full regalia.....leather buckskins, wool trade-blanket around his shoulders, his trade beads around his neck and his pipe cradled in his arms. You could almost smell the aroma of the flowers, the pine trees, the wild sage and the smoke that was curling out from the fire pit.

The sounds of wildlife filled the air.....the bugling of the bull elk, the soft mew of the does answering, the huffing and snorting of a nearby bear, the songs of the coyote wandering close by, the screech of a Bald Eagle flying overhead and.....hidden somewhere in the trees, the occasional 'whooo' of the Great Horned Owl.

This was the special place where we would have our great conversations and where he would share his thoughts. This was also where his spirit would talk of things to be. What a wonderful sight, who wouldn't want these beautiful, serene and peaceful dreams or 'visions' that came from Papa Bear? These 'visions' began not too long after I met Papa Bear and I have no doubt that they will continue..... as long as he needs to reach out to us.

For years Papa Bear always thought that Barry and I were already part of his clan family. We didn't want to remind him that we weren't. It might be too embarrassing for him.....you know how he could forget things occasionally..... (now be nice, he really had good intentions, he was just a little busy most of the time and sometimes he really did have too many frying pans in the fire), but more than that, we didn't feel right in allowing him to continue to believe that we were already part of the clan.

We finally got the courage to approach him in September during his big two-day 75th birthday bash. Of course he was stunned to learn of that and with Karen's help; he began to make immediate arrangements for a ceremony. Barry and I were among some of the very last to be welcomed into the sacred family of the 'Bear Clan'. Our ceremony was held a little over a year ago, at 2 p.m. on a sunny afternoon of October 5th, 2002, it was held in the backyard in Papa Bear's lodge.

But.....isn't that where everyone gathered and where everything happened when it was with Papa Bear? On that day, we were officially blessed and now a part of the clan. Since Barry had known Papa Bear a little longer than I had, it was appropriate that he became family brother # 138 and I became family sister # 139 of Papa Bear's clan family.

I always had a special place in my heart for him and would have loved to be with him at his time of passing. I wasn't able to be there in person but I was with him in spirit and in prayer.

I never knew all of the sadness and pain you felt, but chose to hide from even your family and closest friends. I shied away, choosing instead to remember you in better times. I know we will always have our memories, but mostly he should know that we all loved him and will miss him.

I hear his laughter when I think about him, and the way we were when we were together, it could be anywhere, those are the memories that will always stay in my mind and although I cannot be there to express this to you at this moment, please know that he is in my heart and thoughts and so are you.....his family and his friends. I am so sorry for the loss of Papa Bear. May there be peace and comfort in your world after your time of sorrow. He is in a better place where he is no longer suffering. May he rest in peace now.

Thanks for the happy memories.

Papa Bear was a wonderful man. It's people like him who make this world a better place for all of us. We loved him very much and will always keep all the happy memories alive. He had a wonderful personality and very loving heart. He once said "The greatest thing you can ever learn; is to give love and be loved in return".

Papa Bear taught this lesson in life as often as he could and when he did..... that was his finest shining moment. Sharing the last years of Papa Bear's life will always be one of our most cherished memories. It was an honor to be with him before he left his place on earth to his life of eternal peace and happiness. He will be missed so very much..

I still can't believe you're gone. Your death has left a hole in my heart. I have so many great memories of good times shared together.

I met Papa Bear years ago and from that moment on, he shared his life and life-stories with me. He also shared his knowledge, wisdom, great 'family' reunions, happy times, jokes and laughter.

This.....he also shared with countless others, before and after I met him. He was a wonderful person with a great sense of humor. I always looked forward to a visit or call with him to keep updated with his next amazing story and the latest round of his astounding, hectic and crazy life.....I will miss that too.

I never saw Papa Bear without a smile, and he will be remembered that way - always smiling. Papa Bear, just keep God smiling like you made all of us smile so much. I will always remember his wonderful laugh and warm outgoing personality. Your laughter and friendship will be forever missed. He had a great sense of humor, and always had that special smile even through all of his medical troubles.

I draw strength from the knowledge that you are finally happy and at peace with the Lord. I know you wouldn't want me to grieve and be sad, so in the days to come when I'm really missing you, I'll try to remember these words by Charles Hollingsworth:

*"Do not stand at my grave and weep; I am not there.  
I do not sleep. I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints on snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn's rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush,  
I am the swift uplifting rush of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand there at my grave and cry;  
I am not there. I did not die."*

PAPA BEAR.....

Your spirit will live on forever in the memories of those people whose lives you touched. Please God.....bless this man.....he was truly your finest work of art.

Time floats by. I am missing you more and more. It keeps on hurting. Perhaps the reality of all of this nonsense is setting in. I wish we could have helped you. I wish you would have let us. Any of us would have.....in a heartbeat, we would have been at your side.

But..... you knew that, didn't you? I am glad for your peace. I am glad that you now no longer suffer. But my heart is crushed now that you're gone.

But.....I am NOT glad you are not here. Who will I sit with? Who will I share secrets with? Who will be there to share the laughter? You could make us laugh like no other. Who will share the pure joy of life and all its wonders? Who will touch my heart the way you did?

Thank you for the lessons that you taught. They are many. You will be so terribly missed! I don't know how I can ever get over not seeing your physical presence, not teaching with you, hugging you, talking to you, scolding you, or kissing you... but I know you are still with me in a different way. You know I always loved you unconditionally, and I know that you loved me the same.

I embraced the very essence of your being. Aahhh.....the beauty of the purest form of love.....and friendship! I know that you will continue to 'walk' with me along the path of my life, we talked about that many times.....do you remember?

I cannot begin to explain the void in our lives without you here. You were truly a treasure to every life you touched. Thank you for your friendship! You are loved and missed! You must know by now how much you are loved.

Out of this great loss, I hope all that were touch by your influence will learn a great lesson..... we need to be more aware, love and take better care of our friends and loved ones. I was just one of the many that loved Papa Bear so much.

I feel fortunate to have worked together with Papa Bear as a Hunter Education Instructor for years at the Colorado Division of Wildlife headquarters and numerous other facilities.

He was respected and well-liked by all of his fellow instructors. His passion in life was to teach what he believed in. He taught one of the finest Hunter Education Courses available. His survival booklet, 'The Art of Survival' through the Colorado Division of Wildlife was the direct outcome of his own personal outdoor experiences by actual survival trips into Colorado's high country in winter's sub-freezing weather. This booklet became instrumental as a guide to the survival section of the Colorado Hunter Education Course throughout Colorado.

These personal survival experiences eventually led to the inspiration and founding of 'W.I.S.E.' (Wilderness Institute of Survival Education), an advanced survival course. He became well-known as an International Survival Consultant.



This course was personally taught by him and is testimony to his dedication of reaching out to make people more aware of the techniques for basic survival rules. His presence to teach this survival course was requested throughout the United States and also in other countries on numerous occasions throughout the years. He traveled extensively over the years.

He helped us learn how to appreciate the importance of teaching. He was truly a gifted person. He not only had a gift of laughter, but everyone loved him for his ability to reach so many with his astounding teaching skills.

Papa Bear, your warm, loving and humor-filled life will be deeply missed by all. What an incredible person you were and still are. You will live on in the hearts and lives of the many people you touched.

You helped us through our heartaches, personal losses, grieving and sadness when we needed comfort. You were also there for us in better times of happiness, joy and the celebrations of our lives.

My heart is deeply saddened to say goodbye to such a special person. He was a true gift from God and he will be missed beyond compare. May God bless, watch over and comfort his family and friends at this time and throughout their time on this earth. He will truly be missed by all who enjoyed his company.

Papa Bear, I hope you know how much you are loved and cared about and the very big difference you did make in this world. It's sad to know that our world had lost such a great soul. He was a light in this world, a person who gave his love freely to his family, a person who gave so much to every person he met. His was a beautiful life, too short for those of us left behind. Papa Bear, you left us way too soon. I will miss him so very much!

I thank him for his time, his knowledge and teaching me the meaning of love, life, strength, courage and caring and dedication to your own beliefs. I'm sure that he'll be watching and guiding over all of us and also taking special care of all the animal friends that he ever loved. You were a good friend to me during good and very bad times. You brightened every room you entered. Your spirit will forever live on in our hearts.

There are no words to express how sad it is without Papa Bear. He was my friend, my mentor and my business associate as a fellow co-instructor. He always gave me strength to continue on with my own personal endeavors and inspired me when I wanted to give up. Together we laughed about being "associates of the trade" because of co-instructing classes together.

His smile and bright eyes would always light up a room and for those not paying attention, he always had a joke or two to get their attention and make everyone break into laughter. It really was never a true 'gathering' or a party without Papa Bear. He was the shining light of life in a sometimes very dark world. I was so impressed with his ability to be positive even when things looked bleak. His contagious smile brought great joy to me. I will always remember him in the warmest of memories. I am very happy to have been able to spend time with him, he enriched my life. I grew to love and respect him more the longer I knew him.

He worked long and tireless hours with and for his classes. I remember times that we almost had to force him to rest when we knew he was feeling very tired. He had the most incredible highest standards for work ethics that I knew of and he was one of the finest people I have ever had the opportunity to work with.

He was a genuine inspiration to me and others alike and always will be. He was a man of true conviction, an extremely dedicated person, a hard worker and was a very kind soul. He touched our lives and possibly many more that we are not aware of.

I still can't believe you're gone. Your death has left a hole in my heart. I have so many great memories of good times shared together.

I will all miss him tremendously, he was part of my family, although not by the usual blood lines.....but by choice. I feel honored that our paths in life crossed. So long dearest friend.....until we meet again.

~ Written by: Judith Miller ~  
(‘Little Bear White As Snow’)

*Judith Miller (Golden, CO)*  
*October 24, 2003*