



## David Bender

September 20, 1931 - January 23, 2024

Dr. David Bender was born September 20th 1931 in Eureka, South Dakota, population 1500, the sixth child of Joseph and Mary Bender. They were the only Jewish family in the town. As immigrants, his parents' focus was on survival and stability. David worked hard in school and harder at sports, where he was a three-star athlete, quarterback on the football team, guard on the basketball team, and first baseman for the school baseball team. In addition, growing up during the Depression and watching his beloved brother go off to fight on the beaches of Normandy during World War II made an indelible impression.

After David graduated high school, the family moved to Minneapolis. There, he was a student at the University of Minnesota and graduated Phi Beta Kappa. Inspired by his brother-in-law and friends to study medicine, he attended the University of Minnesota Medical School where he graduated AOA. David interned at Philadelphia General Hospital and started a residency in OBGYN in New Orleans. Realizing he had a different calling, he made a courageous move to switch careers, and moved to California for a new start. He wanted to join the Army, but they didn't need any more physicians; encouraged by his brother, he wrote his senator Hubert Humphrey to make a connection with the public health service. He got an immediate reply and was assigned to be the prison physician at Terminal Island in California. He worked there for two years providing medical care and led talking groups for inmates. During this time, he discovered Lewis R. Wolberg's book, "The Technique of Psychotherapy," which sparked a lifelong passion for psychiatry and psychotherapy. In 1960, he was accepted at the UCLA residency program in Adult Psychiatry and continued with a fourth year in Child Psychiatry. To further deepen his understanding, he joined the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society and Institute. When he opened an office in Westwood, his practice filled in three months, and he worked in Westwood for 58 years. He also supervised residents at UCLA for decades, known as a sage teacher who could explain psychotherapy in a way that could be easily accessed and understood. He only stopped talking to patients when he was 91 due to health reasons.

He married his beloved wife Meri, a dancer and choreographer in 1960, and they celebrated their 63rd anniversary in September 2023. Her creative talents expanded his worldview, and together they raised three daughters, Karen, a writer, Suzanne, a child and adult psychiatrist, and Aimee, a writer. He loved his work; he found great purpose and meaning in helping people understand their lives. He was an incredibly devoted father, fiercely supportive of his daughters' dreams and ambitions while also present and loving during all the tough times. Coming from a background where the focus was survival, he was a pioneer in his family with his interest in exploring the internal emotional landscape. His passion for understanding what is below the surface has helped innumerable people, from his patients to his immediate and extended family. He showered love on those close to him, had a passion for justice, and was a beloved and radiant star of a person.

He is survived by his wife Meri, his children Karen Bender (married to Robert Siegel), Suzanne Bender (married to Randall King), and Aimee Bender (married to Mark Miller), and his six grandchildren, Sarah Bender King, Jonah Siegel, Maia Siegel, Ethan Bender King, Rachel Miller, and Theo Miller. Services will be held at 2:30 pm on Sunday, January 28th at Mt Sinai Cemetery, Hollywood Hills. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to the New Center for Psychoanalysis, Los Angeles.