



Steven Frederick Barker

July 28, 1955 - November 8, 2025

In Loving Memory of
Steven Frederick Barker
July 28, 1955 – November 8, 2025

“LOVE is a higher power. We can’t see it, touch it, nor measure it, but we know when it is there and when it is gone. I believe that my LOVE will exist when my body wastes away...this LOVE will be transformed in ways that I can’t predict...but it cannot be destroyed.” – Steven “Freddy” Barker

An inquisitive boy was born on July 28, 1955, in Harlem, New York, to Rosalie Barker and Frederick Milton Short. From an early age, his family observed that he loved to read, build, and learn. One of Freddy’s fondest memories was the day Rosalie brought home the entire Encyclopedia Britannica. While his curiosity and inventiveness would sometimes lead to mischief, Rosalie knew that his pursuit of knowledge needed fuel, so she worked tirelessly to provide the kindling.

Freddy had a deep love for his mother, the unquestioned family matriarch, helping raise several generations of children, spreading her love and inspiration until the day she passed on. Freddy also cherished his time with his father, and it was through Frederick that Freddy developed his lifelong love for the New York Yankees.

Freddy revered his older brothers, Reggie and Michael, whose very names earned him respect and paved the way for him in a vibrant, but tumultuous neighborhood. He adored his older sisters, Norma, Kathy, and Carol, who spoiled him rotten and taught him how to speak with truth and power. Freddy, in turn, doted on his younger siblings, Faye, Alan (Cynthia), and Kevin, who he would always speak of with love and pride. Freddy's beloved nieces and nephews brought him constant joy and remained an enormous source of happiness throughout his life.

It was no surprise that Freddy excelled in school, and yet, as often happens in these fairy tales, it took a special teacher to see his worth and help propel him in his pursuit of knowledge. His teacher, Mr. Jack Grey, recognized his extraordinary potential and approached Rosalie with an idea that changed the trajectory of Freddy's life forever. That idea led to Freddy becoming one of the first Black students at Phillips Exeter Academy, one of the most prestigious schools in the nation. He didn't look back (much). From there, he took on Columbia University, where he expanded his love for learning and made many lifelong friends.

One spring night, fate introduced Steve to Vanessa, a beautiful, strong, loving woman from Queens, who would become his partner for life. They caught each other's eye while they boogied down at the "Down Under" club. She saw in him a unique, caring, and brilliant soul. Their partnership—built on love, determination, and mutual respect—became the foundation of a family rooted in empathy, integrity, and compassion. Steve and Vanessa enjoyed spending vacations with family and friends, going to sporting events and, of course, dancing. Most of all, they treasured simply relaxing at home in each other's company.

When his firstborn, Kamil, entered the world, Steve described her birth as a

“magical, spiritual experience.” Of the birth of his youngest, Reggie, Steve would say he now felt “complete.” To his children, Steve was everything: a tutor, coach, storyteller, advisor, historian, chauffeur, advocate, protector, a companionable silence, a bear hug after a bad day – an unwavering source of love. He took great pride in the fact that both of his children chose lives of service. Steve’s two grandsons, Mace and Esteban, filled him with a joy that illuminated his face and spirit. They will always know to start the day with grandpa’s morning mantra: “I’m alive, I’m alert, and I feel GREAT!”

Freddy was a proud New Yorker. In many ways, he was New York itself – emblematic of the city’s flash and grit. When he left New York, he became one of the city’s greatest exports and ambassadors. He was a child of Harlem, a child of the Johnson Projects, and he carried that heritage with pride everywhere he went. Freddy’s ancestors spoke of the “flying Africans” who were said to have flown back across the ocean to return to ancestral lands after passing on. If Freddy’s soul does take flight, it would surely make a pit stop in Harlem.

James Baldwin once said, “whoever is born in New York is ill-equipped to deal with any other city: all other cities seem, at best, a mistake, and, at worst, a fraud.” And yet, Steve and his family built a beautiful new life in Columbus, Ohio, where he embraced a community and a people he grew to love dearly. Steve did whatever was necessary to provide for his family, letting neither pride nor any obstacle stand in his way. Ultimately, he found his niche, becoming a trailblazer in the field of Information Technology as an analyst and programmer, specializing in cybersecurity. His inventive mind and analytical gifts allowed him to flourish. Steve was known by his peers as an expert, leader, and innovator until the day he retired from JPMorgan Chase in 2025.

Freddy loved to tinker, to discover, but most of all, he loved people. He loved

to listen to your story, your truth, your ideas, and your dreams. He made friends in the most unusual places and truly never met a stranger. He was a teacher, mentor, and a big brother to many. He knew how to listen, when to speak up, and when to take a stand. His mentorship guided many lost souls out of dark forests. Wherever his feet landed, he found connection.

The story of a man cannot be confined to the four corners of a page or the ink of a pen, least of all this man. The attempt would make even Sisyphus smirk as he rolled his boulder up the mountain once again. However, after the ink on these words are dry, perhaps you will tinker a bit with the story of Freddy, of Steve, of Dad. Add your own personal tales, laughs, and struggles. Keep them in your heart, or share them with his family, so they might add it to their own story of his life.

Know that if you are reading this and you feel the pang of sadness at his loss, you are not alone. Know also that Steve loved you. Know that Freddy LOVES you. Because his love can never be destroyed.

Tribute Wall

GF

“ *Graham Fearnley purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Steven Frederick Barker.*



Graham Fearnley - March 09 at 06:51 PM

MT

“ *40 years...Steve was such a beautiful soul! From the first day of being a part of his onboarding journey at Checkfree, a million moments of laughter, to sharing family moments with Vanessa and our children (the most amazing Saturday pancake breakfasts), to reconnecting at Chase, to landing at Huntington with Vanessa...and then my going away celebration in July of 2023...he always made your heart smile! His laughter filled a room and he made it brighter! Steve will forever hold a special place in my heart! ❤️ 🙏 🕊️*

Michelle Tucker - March 06 at 10:34 AM

AA

“ *I work with Steve at Huntington Banks. I enjoyed his levity, and his technical prowess. Then is involvement with Information Security later on was a special surprise, and benefited those in Columbus. Wishing you and the family well.*

Aaron Ansari - January 15 at 09:51 AM



“ I never saw steve after our graduation from Exeter. But I remember vividly that he helped me in math when i was having trouble understanding a concept. he was so effortless and natural that in my/our extreme youth, i concluded that he was just more gifted at math than most of us. he also introduced me to Maggot Brain by Parliament, and they are to this day my favorite group. i am sad i never saw steve to thank him for his brief but enduring influence on me. stephen chao

Stephen Chao - January 09 at 04:30 PM



“ Steve and I met in 9th grade gym class at Exeter. Two very different young men who shared a love of life and laughter. We both smirked at our elderly “prep spaz” gym coach, Coach Ben, who laboriously (and probably for the thousandth time), instructed us on Bob Cousy’s method for shooting a proper foul shout. You never forgot those with whom you have shared a good or funny moment in time with. I really liked Steve and I will miss him.

Jay Markell Exeter Class of 1973 - January 04 at 04:01 PM



“ Steve was a bright light, living in a dark world. He loved his family dearly and shown compassion to his fellow man. Steve will be missed.



FREDERICK Lockridge - December 23, 2025 at 06:20 AM



“ *Tyrone Lockridge lit a candle in memory of Steven Frederick Barker*



Tyrone Lockridge - December 15, 2025 at 03:08 PM