



Mr Donald Jordan Bernstein

January 13, 1928 - July 15, 2016

Donald J. Bernstein, a longtime resident of Huntington, NY, and Stockbridge, MA, died peacefully at home on July 15, 2016 at the age of 88. Born on January 13, 1928 in Lowell, MA, son of Arthur and Minnie Bernstein, he was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, veteran, musician, educator, and friend. Don was known for his outgoing friendliness, sense of humor, and especially his love of music and playing his trumpets. Even at the age of 85, he was playing principal trumpet in three community orchestras.

Don was a consummate musician who attended Juilliard and double majored in trumpet and voice at Boston University. He used his talent not only to perform but to teach the next generation. He had a 35-year public-school career as a band director at Little Plains and Thomas J. Lahey Elementary Schools in the Harborfields School District, Greenlawn, NY. His knowledge of brass and his hobby in recording gave him the opportunity to serve as a staff member of the Empire Brass Seminar at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute for over 20 years, where students from around the world came to study with members of the Empire Brass Quintet.

Early in his career he cantored in Temples in West Newton, MA and Providence, RI; sang backup with Richard Tucker for eight years; conducted an army band during the Korean conflict; and played vaudeville shows with big bands in the late '40s. Don always enjoyed recounting his stint playing for

The Three Stooges (Moe, Larry, and Shemp). He also had the privilege of playing in the 92nd Street Y orchestra in the '50s with Albert Einstein in the audience. For 20 years Don played trumpet in the Long Island Symphony. Another source of great pride for Don was playing taps at the Stockbridge Memorial Day parades for many years.

Don was preceded in death by his parents and his brother, Norman Bernstein. He is survived by his loving, caring wife of 54 years, Gayle; son, David Bernstein who lives in Santa Clara, CA with his wife Karen Taylor and daughter Isabelle; daughter, Karen Brouady who lives in Burlington, MA, with her husband Christopher and daughters Hannah and Amanda. Services were held on July 27th in Lenox and Stockbridge, MA, where Don and Gayle spent summers since 1970. Donations in Don's memory may be made to HospiceCare in The Berkshires or the charity of your choice.

Previous Events

Service

JUL **27** (ET)

Roche Funeral Home
120 Main Street
P.O. Box 152
Lenox, MA 01240
(413) 637-0699
eroche120fh@gmail.com

Tribute Wall

CV

“ *Mr Donald J Bernstein is absolutely UNforgettable! He was the best thing that happened to me at Little Plains Elementary other than learning how to read & write lol*

Mr Bernstein was one of THE best musical conductors of all time! He strived for, demanded, & produced greatness. He settled for nothing less than perfection. He had a real gifted ear for music. I'll never forget when he promoted me from 3rd chair straight to first! I still have the album of our concert featuring our best performance, "A Taste Of Honey". I kept a turntable so that every now & then I can listen to it. Mr Bernstein made us Carnegie Hall status & we were just 12yrs old! Lol

So now you weave your musical magic for all the angels. Goodbye for now Mr Donald J Bernstein; until our next great performance ❤️

Carolyn Vassel - September 19, 2025 at 09:07 AM

CV

“ *Carolyn Vassel lit a candle in memory of Mr Donald Jordan Bernstein*



Carolyn Vassel - September 19, 2025 at 08:35 AM

BM

“ I was a trumpet student of Donald's for 7 years in the late 70's and early 80's. Through his teaching, I had many amazing experiences in music which included NY All State Band, traveling and performing throughout Japan with the Brown University Jazz Band, and performing at Carnegie Hall with the Brown University Orchestra and Jazz Band. I was able to reconnect with Donald in the late 90's when we both play in a community orchestra in Stockbridge, MA. I have just recently picked up my trumpet again which made me think of him. I will always be grateful for all he taught me (even if he did get annoyed when I didn't practice enough!).

Bethany Bearce Moore - July 14, 2019 at 10:39 PM

DB

Thanks for sharing this, Bethany!

David Bernstein - August 01, 2019 at 08:57 PM

DB

Did you know that I went to Brown? Graduated in '86.

David Bernstein - August 01, 2019 at 08:57 PM

AD

“ Don was my French Horn teacher for most of my childhood for eight years. I was just thinking of him as my son is completing his music studies with music teacher as he now heads to college. Don was a major influence on my life. My passion for music stems from his influence and guidance. His kindness, confidence and humor all left an indelible mark. May his memory be a blessing to his family and all those who miss him. Andrew Dietz

Andrew Dietz - June 15, 2019 at 05:10 PM

SS

“ *Mr. Bernstein was my trumpet teacher from my Junior high thorough high school years.*

I went on to Major in music and became a music teacher myself.

Rest in peace, My. Bernstein.

=== Steven Shore

Steven Shore - May 16, 2018 at 03:25 PM

CV

Hi Steven, I'm Carolyn Vassel one of Mr Bernstein's clarinet players.

Wow, you went on to teach music yourself- how wonderful. So he was TRULY your mentor in every sense of the word! 🙌

Carolyn Vassel - September 19, 2025 at 09:33 AM

CA

“ *The Caputi family send its condolences. We will always remember Don's kindness, musical talent, and outstanding teaching. We remember him with great affection and gratefulness.*

Caputi - August 30, 2016 at 06:09 PM

SF

“ *I am very sad to hear of Mr Bernstein' s passing
My thought and prayers are with Gayle and his family
Fondly Sharon Wilson Ferrante(Dr Al's office)*



Sharon Ferrante - August 14, 2016 at 04:05 PM

KS

“ I cannot tell you how much Mr. Bernstein meant to me. My Mom used to tell us he acted like Leonard Bernstein. No venue was too small even the garage of the Concord Hotel. He made a big difference in my life. He let me be a part of something bigger than myself....the band. I am sorry for your loss.

Karen Gottlieb Sucher - August 14, 2016 at 03:59 PM

EM

“ Newt and I are so saddened to read about Don's passing. He was such a nice person to be around. It was difficult not to smile being in his company.

Ellen Meiselman - August 14, 2016 at 09:14 AM

LD

Mr. Bernstein instilled in me my love for music back in the 4th grade at Little Plains Elementary School. I carry with me fond memories of my band days and making "the record" of our concert. He always had an encouraging word and a smile for all of his students. What a wonderful teacher he was!

Laurette Maro DeCabia - August 14, 2016 at 09:46 AM

EB

My two sisters and I all had Mr Bernstein. I still have the record album we made. He was strict and fair and the results were always fabulous! A wonderful teacher!

Eileen Gallagher Bunt - August 14, 2016 at 02:43 PM

AH

I was in the 4th grade in Little Plains school..1983..and Mr.Bernstein moved me up into the advanced band with the 4th and 6th graders.We made a beautiful album.Chariots of Fire.To this,day,I have played it for my own daughters .I never realized how talented,we were..until I have heard many elementary school bands over the years.Mr Bernstein took his music very seriously, and because of his passion and comittment,to sounding the best we could, he got us to sound unbelievable. I am blown away ,and so proud when I listen to our album now. .he made us sound truly amazing. He will be remembered always.

Alison Hawkins-Munoz - August 14, 2016 at 03:55 PM

RW

Mr. Bernstein gave me the opportunity to play in his band at Little Plains. I'll never forget his kindness and talents. God Bless!

Rick Wagner - August 15, 2016 at 12:47 PM

JK

Very sad to learn of Mr. Bernstein's passing. A dedicated teacher and director who showed personal interest in each of his students. I played trombone under his tutelage in the Little Plains School band when the school opened in 1962 and then studied privately with him for several years (at \$5.00 per lesson in the mid-1960's!). He was a master at recruiting and inspiring generations of Harborfields music students; his bands performed technically and musically far beyond the levels one would have expected of elementary students as demonstrated on the 1967 album (which I still have) which he recorded with the Little Plains band (my brother Tom played cornet in that edition of the band). A wonderful gentleman; he will be sorely missed by me and those who lives he touched.

*John T. Kuehl
Dallastown, PA*

John Kuehl - August 22, 2016 at 10:24 AM

MR

I am saddened to learn of Don's passing today. His positive spirit will always be with me. He was a dear friend and fine trumpet colleague. We played together side by side in many orchestral concerts and rehearsals. He was so much fun to be with and was so helpful in so many ways musically and in life. I will certainly miss him, but will always remember his strong positive spirit, musicianship and intellect. My heart goes out to Gayle and his family for their loss. Tomorrow is my Dad's Yahrzeit and when I sound the Shofar at the morning Minyan I will also be thinking of Don. God Bless.

*Sincerely,
Matt Raskin
Huntington, NY*

Matthew Raskin - September 28, 2016 at 11:52 AM

DB

I just ran across this page in a search to find out how he was, and I'm so sorry I didn't get a chance to reconnect before we lost him.

He was my trumpet teacher, and the best teacher I've had in my time playing. He took me from last chair, second trumpet in the 7th grade band to Tanglewood Institute and then Oberlin Conservatory. He knew just how to push a student like me, who was motivated to perform but unmotivated to practice, and he got the best out of me.

If it's the goal of a life to have a positive impact on the people around us, then I count his as a life well lived, and I thank him for setting an example that I've carried with me ever since.

-- Dave Bushnell

Dave Bushnell - April 22, 2021 at 10:33 AM