



Gregory "Bear" O'Bryan  
August 20, 1947 - October 11, 2014

Thank You for Joining Us  
In Celebrating the Life of  
Gregory "Bear" O'Bryan

At Maggie Walker Governor's School  
Richmond, Virginia  
October 25, 2014

Order of Service

David Barnes, presiding

Readings and remarks from a few of Bear's admirers

- Faith Alejandro ('01)
- Sarah Huang ('09)
- John Piersol ('02)
- Sydney Kessler
- Chuck Sullivan
- Raleigh Browne ('15)

Call for anyone else who would like to speak

Music

"The Prayer"

lyrics by Carole Bayer Sager and David Foster  
sung by Andrew Morton ('13) and Morgan Thweatt ('16)  
accompanied by John Walter

Slideshow Presentation

"Con Te Partirò"

lyrics by Lucio Quarantotto

music by Francesco Sartori

sung by Matthew King ('14)

Music

"Empty Cup"

music and lyrics by Alex Norman

sung by Alex Norman ('16)

Closing remarks

Phil Tharp

**Please join us for continued celebration and light**

"If I die, survive me with such sheer force  
that you waken the furies of the pallid and the cold,  
from south to south lift your indelible eyes,  
from sun to sun dream through your singing mouth.

I don't want your laughter or your steps to waver,

I don't want my heritage of joy to die.

Don't call up my person. I am absent.

Live in my absence as if in a house.

Absence is a house so vast  
that inside you will pass through its walls  
and hang pictures on the air.

Absence is a house so transparent  
that I, lifeless, will see you, living,  
and if you suffer, my love, I will die again."

- Pablo Neruda

## In Tribute

Bear O'Bryan, my colleague and friend, provided for all of us a sacred space in a secular world, a sanctuary of stillness in our otherwise non-stop days. We keep the best of him alive when we give ourselves permission to enter that silence, when we allow ourselves the time to process our thoughts so that our true voices emerge. This is how we practice *tikkun olam*, a Hebrew belief that each of us can "repair the world" by being present to the vast openness, by listening, by speaking truth to power, by honoring the sacred in ourselves and in the everyday.

— Michele Surat

Bear was a gift. His generosity of spirit touched the lives of countless students and teachers who learned to see themselves through his eyes – eyes that looked for and found beauty and possibility in everyone. He taught us we could accomplish anything if we were willing to be our best selves.

— Celie Boswell

Details come to mind and an image settles there: the flowing hair, the khaki shorts, the soft voice, the keen eye, the darkened room, the music, the lamps, the quilts, the sketches, and Marilyn. It is a composite that hardly captures the essence of the man. He was unconventional, open and divergent, steadfast, tenacious, tender. Like the Transcendentalists he admired, he found solace in simple things, celebrated free expression, lived deliberately. Listened sincerely. Will be missed dearly.

— Lisa Williams

Bear's greatest gift was his intuition, and it was a gift he used wisely. He may have been soft-spoken, but his impact on our lives and the classroom is much more of a roar. He was my mentor, my friend, and my hero. I am so thankful for having had the chance to know him, and my world has become a little darker with his absence. — Kerry Sheppard

Bear knew the difference between the still, quiet essence of things--and people--and the noise and flash of glossy surfaces. Courier is an honest font. It does not conceal a lack of substance; it gives each word space to breathe. Bear gave each of us space to breathe, but he also gave us an example of a man who knew what mattered and lived a life consistent with his values. He had figured it out and trusted us to do the same.

— Janet Spencer