



## Garrett Derner

November 28, 1955 - February 10, 2026

Garrett Derner, 70, of Evanston, Illinois, passed on at home on February 10, 2026.

Born in Chicago, raised in Deerfield, Illinois, Garrett graduated from Deerfield High School in 1973 and received his bachelor's in math from National College of Education (now National Louis University) in Evanston.

Garrett always followed his passions for justice, kindness, folk dance, excellence in music, and high-quality food. He was a caring man and would drop everything to help a friend or a stranger.

As a young man, he protested the Vietnam War and believed in the ideals of peace, love, and co-operation that defined that era. Other formative experiences included canoe trips in the Boundary Waters and learning macrobiotic cooking and eating at the Kushi Institute in Boston.

After establishing himself as a formidable computer programmer, Garrett had time for folk dance and playing guitar. He was a founding member of the Chicago Spelmanslag (Swedish folk music performers), where he met many life-long friends.

He met Lisa Gordon at a contra dance in 2002, courted her assiduously, and

they were  
married two years later.

After marriage, he took up new interests. His love of superb coffee led him to roasting coffee beans, and his unmatched olfactory abilities allowed him to roast them to perfection. He started Songbird Coffee Roasters to enjoy organic, fair trade coffee and share it with friends, neighbors, and customers.

Garrett also developed a deep interest in electronics. He repaired computers for friends and learned enough about resistors, transistors, and diodes to teach children. He enjoyed tinkering and was never happier than when there was a machine to be fixed. Some of his other hobbies were the microbiology of food ferments and the prime factors of numbers.

Garrett was a life-long member of the Christian Science church. Although always a rationalist, he found a spiritual home in the church of his youth.

He was preceded in death by his parents Marian and Marvin Derner, step-father Eldred Dusold, and uncle Oliver Colbentson. He leaves behind his wife Lisa Gordon; his aunt Nancy Colbentson; cousins Ariane Colbentson and Hans Lansdorfer, Kerry and Daniel and family, and Felix and Verena and family; and two sad cats.

Memorial donations may be made to A Just Harvest, <https://ajustharvest.org/>, a Rogers Park food and justice organization.

Garrett's remains were cremated by water (alkaline hydrolysis), as he loved chemistry and cared for the environment.

Memory and story-telling party, Sunday, March 29, 2:00pm - 5:30pm at Swedish American Museum, 5211 N. Clark St., Chicago.

Please RSVP to [lisa@lisagordonevents.com](mailto:lisa@lisagordonevents.com)

Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-318-1305 or [www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com](http://www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com)

# Previous Events

## Memory and Story-Telling Party

MAR **29**. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (CT)

Swedish American Museum

5211 N. Clark St.

Chicago, IL 60640

<https://www.swedishamericanmuseum.org/>