



Bryan Robert McDermott

October 12, 1948 - April 28, 2026

Robert Bryan McDermott, 77, was born on Columbus Day in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Bryan Robert McDermott died unexpectedly on April 28, 2026 — National Blueberry Pie Day - in Manassas, Virginia. Known to all as Brian, with an i and emphatically not Robert, he once went so far as to legally reverse the order of his names, but without changing the spelling, to ensure he was called what he preferred. Brian embraced all that life offered. He lived as a free spirit and enjoyed a full life, deeply loved by family and friends.

His determination to live life on his own terms began early. As a 5-year old in Scranton, he was asked to get an egg by his older brother to duplicate a trick performed by his grandfather. Stopping by a local grocer, without money, he used his wits to procure one egg. Returning home with the egg, he climbed a fence with the now forgotten egg in his pocket when it promptly broke. Arriving home, confronted by his mother and grandmother, he had no regrets about

obtaining an egg without money but was furious that the egg was broken causing a mess in his pocket. Later, as a twelve-year-old paper carrier, he was reprimanded by priests at the parish rectory for riding his bicycle across their lawn while delivering newspapers. He stopped crossing the grass but made sure the paper hit the aluminum storm door with enough force each morning to loudly announce its arrival, a system he considered both efficient and memorable.

Brian loved to travel, visiting friends around the world, meeting new people, and experiencing different cultures, and, whenever possible, their local food and drink. Growing up, he lived in Scranton, PA; Williamsburg, VA; Heidelberg, Germany; Newport News, VA; and Seoul, South Korea, where he graduated from Seoul American High School. His wandering continued into adulthood, with time spent in Akron, OH; Newport News; Richmond, VA, where he attended Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU); Dallas, TX; New Orleans, LA; Alexandria, VA; and Khartoum, Sudan, where he worked in information technology for a U.S. State Department contractor. Eventually, he set aside his nomadic life and settled in Manassas 40 years ago, where he built lasting friendships.

Sports were a lifelong interest, and he found his true passion at VCU, rowing for the crew team

when it was still a club sport at Richmond Professional Institute. With Bryan's leadership as cocaptain, the program achieved varsity status in 1970. During a major flood, he helped rescue two of the team's four shells from the boathouse as the James River crested at 28.6 feet during Hurricane Camille, apparently deciding that saving boats was a better idea than explaining their loss later. He remained closely connected with his teammates, attending regular gatherings throughout his life.

He also developed a passion for hot air balloons, becoming a licensed pilot in 1970 and flying his balloon at the first Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta in 1972 with just 12 other pilots. On his 70th birthday, he returned to the skies, flying with another pilot in one of 524 balloons launched during the morning mass ascension at the 48th festival. He piloted "Brian's Balloon" throughout the Richmond area, offering passengers a memorable experience—often complete with a chauffeured limousine and a champagne breakfast served in a field before takeoff, because Brian rarely believed in doing anything the ordinary way.

Brian could build or fix just about anything. That talent led him to co-found Richmond Graphics, a large-format silk-screening business in Richmond's Manchester neighborhood that produced billboard and apparel graphics for a decade. In addition to his strength in

sales, he kept its presses and dryers running with ingenuity and persistence. Later, he applied those same skills in a career in information technology—though mastering the alerts on his cell phone (his “pocket computer”) remained a challenge he approached with suspicion and selective success.

Brian is survived by his siblings, Poppy McDermott Cumpson, Jeff McDermott, and Tim McDermott (Esther); his son, Walter Toney (Cindy); his first cousins, TJ Hengler and Art Hengler (Kathie); many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews; and more friends than can be counted. He was preceded in death by his parents, Tom and Louise McDermott, and his sister, Mary McDermott Cox Hughes.

Two Celebrations of Life are planned. Tim and Esther McDermott will host a gathering on Sunday, May 31, in Ashland, Virginia. Walter and Cindy Toney will host a second celebration on Sunday, June 28, in Manassas, Virginia. For details on either or both events, please email brian@mcdermott.net

Upcoming Events

Celebration of Life

MAY 31.

For details on either or both events, please email brian@mcdermott.net
Ashland, VA

Celebration of Life

JUN 28.

For details on either or both events, please email brian@mcdermott.net
Manassas, VA

Tribute Wall

SC

“ I was very surprised and sad when a friend in Richmond sent me Brian’s obit this morning. I knew him back in the 1970’s and have many hilarious memories of him from those days with his hot air balloon. He was quite a character, full of life and mischievous pranks. A very unique person and Im sure his family and friends will never forget him.

Sarah Buchan Clatworthy

Sarah Buchan Clatworthy - May 17 at 08:42 AM