**David Zahrt – Obituary 7/2/2020**

David was an itinerant who discovered in himself roots as deep as those of the Loess Hills prairie of Western Iowa, a place long his home. He was a 'work-in-progress', striving at every moment to capture and build on the momentum his life had created. He also believed that “nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope” (Reinhold Niebuhr).

David Ernest Zahrt was born in Iowa City, in September 1937 to Luella S. Zahrt and Norman E. Zahrt. After Norman lost his life during World War II, Luella married Donald Reese, and she, with David and his sister Christy Zahrt, moved to Turin, Iowa to settle on the Reese family farm. Sisters Jo and Karen were later born to Don and Luella.

At the University of Iowa, David met Linda Marken and they were married in Iowa City. Jay and Heidi were born after the family moved to New Jersey where David enrolled in Drew University to earn a Masters of Divinity. He briefly served as a minister in a Methodist parish church in New Jersey.

The next chapter led David and Linda to Chicago, where they began 20 years of work with the Ecumenical Institute and the Institute of Cultural Affairs. They devoted themselves to grass roots community development around the world. His favorite recollections were from Australia and Kenya. Stories of his life are captured in his recently self-published memoir.

David and Linda returned to Iowa in 1985 while Jay and Heidi were in college, and eventually settled on the Reese family farm, where the Zahrts opened the Reese Homestead House as a Bed and Breakfast. Many guests remember him playing the player piano and joining in a song. David delighted in sharing the beauty of the Loess Hills. He diligently worked to restore native prairie on the Reese Homestead land. His vision for the earth offered the opportunity to promote long-term land protection in the Hills with The Nature Conservancy and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

After twenty years on the Homestead, clear that no one from the fifth generation would be returning, David and his sisters ensured the property would be preserved in perpetuity under an easement held by The Nature Conservancy. The Iowa Natural

Heritage Foundation facilitated the subsequent sale of the Reese Homestead to Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Monona County Conservation Board.

In 2010 David and Linda moved to Carson City to be closer to family. David continued to demonstrate his values in his beekeeping and in helping to convert their home to solar power and organic gardening. David was an avid supporter of Muscle Powered, and rode his bicycle as primary transportation. Riding a bicycle represented his self-reliance for travel, and a sense of freedom and fitness. He took on many long-ride challenges. He became an ally of Capital Cities C.I.R.C.L.E.S., a non-profit committed to lifting people out of poverty. Each Monday, he stood for peace with a small group in downtown Carson City.

He acted on his passion for and concern about climate change when, in 2014, David joined the Great March for Climate Action from LA to Washington D.C. Upon his return to Carson City, he started the local chapter of Citizens’ Climate Lobby to encourage legislation for climate action.

Throughout David’s life, he rejoiced in music. In high school, he took voice lessons and learned to play string bass. Singing with companions, and playing music in a band lifted his spirit. He loved to perform for a crowd or join a parade.

He led an intentional life of service. His soul was nourished by his family, the bounty of the earth, protecting the environment, helping people to reach their potential, and working toward world peace. He was a leader by example, teaching and living the changes he wished to see in the world.

David made a peaceful passage into an unknown dimension on June 29, 2020 in Carson City, Nevada. He was preceded in death by his son, Jay Zahrt Freed. He is survived by his wife Linda, his daughter Heidi Zahrt and son-in-law Yeshi Tenzin, grandson Sonam Zahrt-Tenzin, granddaughter Kinley Zahrt-Tenzin, daughter-in-law Trish Freed, and sisters Christy Tews, Jo Nelson, and Karen Bird and their families.