

Merlin Brandt was born on September 15, 1945, on a farm in Rickreall, Oregon, during the prune harvest, and his siblings recall his dad telling them about the arrival this way: "Well, we have another little prune picker!" He was the fourth of five children of Pete and Sally Brandt, and brother to Virgil, Al, Dot, and Jack Brandt, all of whose lives were shaped by their wonderful parents, their farm, and the hand of God working through their many friends and family at the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church, where they were active for decades. Merlin chose to follow Jesus in faith and was baptized there when he was about 12.

Merlin graduated top of his class at Dallas High School, then went to Multnomah School of the Bible and earned a diploma. Being a conscientious objector during the war in Vietnam, he next needed to serve 2 years of alternative service, and so began the adventure of working with Mennonite Central Committee in Brazil, the first year in farming, the second year on loan to a US government aid agency working in Rio de Janeiro. He became fluent in Portuguese, started playing guitar, and developed a love of Latin American music that never left him. The time in Brazil was mind-opening, and life-changing.

After 3 months of traveling with his younger brother Jack in South America before returning to the US and a dose of reentry culture shock, he decided to go to University of Oregon in Eugene. He began studying economics, then took a break to decide what he really wanted to do, meanwhile working as a general carpenter in Eugene to pay the rent. He never quite got back to finish that degree and was an expert carpenter the rest of his life. He got involved in a house church that later became Orchard Street church. There he met Kim Doyle, whom he married on the same farm where he was born, on August 11, 1973.

Merlin wanted to try building a house from foundation up, so he and Kim bought a lot in Eugene and took out a \$10,000 loan from Merlin's Dad and they built their first house over 2 ½ years. He did everything: siting and surveying, building foundation forms and pouring concrete, plumbing and wiring, masonry and drywall, flooring and roofing, with a lot of help from his wife and his and church friends. They finished in time to welcome daughter Molly in August of 1979. Not quite 4 years later son Peter was born in May 1983.

In Eugene Merlin also met the other great love of his life, volleyball, and he played in city leagues, church gyms, and community centers weekly for years, from before the kids were born until last September.

The Brandt family moved to Brownsville, Texas to serve with the Mennonite Board of Missions from 1985 to 1987 where Merlin built and repaired homes for low-income families on the border, and supervised Mennonite "Winter Texans" helping do the same.

In 1987 after that voluntary service stint, the Brandts settled in Dallas, Oregon to be near Merlin's parents, where he continued in carpentry and took up well-pump repair, working for a local contractor, whose right-hand man he remained for the next 20 years. People often encouraged him to go into business for himself, but his family knew he'd never be able to bring himself to charge enough to make any money, so they were perfectly content without a family business.

In 2001 Merlin was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, which he gracefully contended with for 18 years, continuing to play volleyball, do carpentry projects, handle all the nuts and bolts of day-to-day life in the empty nest, and be his family's rock in a hundred other ways.

Merlin was a traveler, and preferred to travel cheap. He took the family on a counter-clockwise round-the-country tour on the way back to Oregon after the two years in Texas, that included camping, crashing with friends, Mennonite You Way stays, and old-highway motels. In 1999 he took his Dallas Mennonite Brethren youth group to Puerto Rico to work with Mennonite Disaster Service. Over the years Merlin, often with family, traveled to all but 4 states in the US, to almost every country in Latin America, to Ireland, Germany, and the Czech Republic. In 2018 Merlin, Kim, Molly, and Peter Brandt decided to throw caution to the wind and check out Japan together. It challenged him physically, but will always be one of his wife and kids' best memories.

Merlin was good at so many things, and all his resourcefulness was always at the service of anyone who needed it. Never a man of many words, whatever he said was worth listening to, and having him in charge of any project put everybody involved at ease. He was blessed with a sound mind and the kindest heart to the end of his life on earth. He loved you all and we will miss him together.