



## Gunther Ulrich Keil

January 5, 1939 - May 21, 2026

Gunther Ulrich Keil, a skilled woodworker and a friend of nature, passed away suddenly from a heart condition on May 21, 2026. He leaves behind a legacy of creativity, a deep love for his family, and numerous pollinator gardens.

Gunther was born in Berlin on January 5, 1939 to Herbert Keil and Charlotte Keil (Schreiber), and was raised by his stepmother Ruth along with his older brother Horst (predeceased) and his stepsister Marion. Gunther studied Classical Philosophy and German Literature in Germany and received his master's degree from the University of Waterloo, Canada. In 1966, he met his future wife, Geraldine Keil (Piazza), and they freewheeled around Europe in his old Mercedes Benz 180D parade car. He taught German Language and Literature in Helsinki, Finland before emigrating to the USA in 1968, where he taught German at the University of Georgia and then at Alfred University. He changed his focus from academia to living the "good life" of farming in Greenwood, NY where he worked from sunrise to sunset raising sheep and tending to his bees. Gunther's craft business, Wild Apples, evolved after he started making wooden toys for his own children. His animal and nature themed toys as well as unique works of art have been represented in numerous art galleries and museum collections.

In 1983, he bought land in Trumansburg NY, and with the help of his friends, built a passive solar home and renovated outbuildings for his workshop. Over

the years, he transformed this land with a flock of sheep, his tractor, brush hog, chainsaw, beehives, gardens, trails and sculptures into a landscape that reflected his personality. He was a dedicated member of a weekly local Sunday Grupo de Espanol as well as the Ulysses Bee Friendly Community Committee.

Gunther was a visionary who could pick up a piece of wood and use its natural features to create a unique work of art, a utilitarian one-of-a kind gate, or a playful children's toy. True to his philosophy of life, he was a lighthouse for the belief that "keeping it simple is the best option." He was an adventurer who cherished traveling off the beaten path and immersing himself in the local culture. Through the lenses of his cameras, he artfully captured the essence of his surroundings and family gatherings. He spoke many languages, had a sharp sense of humor, and preferred deep conversation. He would tell you that "bro-dozer" gas guzzling pick-up trucks were entirely obnoxious and superfluous, instead "der hippie das radwandern" minimized his environmental footprint by riding his bike to the post office. He single-handedly kept the best cheap imported "quaffable" wineries afloat despite living amid the Finger Lakes Wine Trail. He loved hiking, cross-country skiing, and sitting around a table sharing a meal with his family and friends.

Gunther is survived by his wife Geraldine (Geri) Keil; his stepsister, Marion Uderzo; his children, Kaspar (Laura), Sonja (Mario), and Felix (Sophie); and his five grandchildren, Quintin, Clayton, Elias, Leon, and Lily.

A Celebration of Life will be held later this summer (details are yet to be determined).

In lieu of cut flowers, Gunther would prefer you grow some pollinator friendly plants.

In honor of Gunther's "leave no trace" approach to living on this planet, memorial contributions may be made to the Finger Lakes Trails Club <https://fingerlakestrail.org/members/give>

Another way to honor Gunther's memory is to practice a little consumer restraint—especially when it comes to plastic—and raise a glass of “good enough” wine to a life extraordinarily well lived.

Arrangements by B.L. Bush & Sons Funeral Home. Please share memories and sign his guestbook at [www.BLBUSH.com](http://www.BLBUSH.com)

# Tribute Wall

RS

“ Soon after arriving in Alfred, Gunther ("Gunter" to us) and Geri showed up in our driveway with his VW minibus and a bunch of goats (or sheep?) in the back. He was told by an Alfred colleague that we had just bought our farm and might know of another he might look at. I took him to one we had considered and he bought it jointly with Wolf, who was still living in Germany and making the money to pay for it as a top systems analyst and programmer.

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**Ross Scott** - June 17 at 10:33 AM

MR

“ 1 file added to the album Interview with Gunther



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**Markus Robinson** - June 01 at 09:38 AM

MR

*I've had the great good fortune to have known Gunther for eight years thanks to my wonderful wife Christine who has known Gunter and Geri since the 'back to the land' era. Gunter and I are both woodworkers and Gunter graciously allowed me to use his shop for my projects. My house is graced with several of Gunters toys and in particular his magnificent Noah's Ark. I'll miss Gunter! - Markus Robinson*

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**Markus Robinson** - June 01 at 04:40 PM