



David Morice

Dave Morice, known to many as Dr. Alphabet, passed peacefully Friday morning, August 21, 2026, at Crestview Nursing Home, West Branch, Iowa, after a long battle with Lewy Body dementia. Known as a writer, visual artist, performance artist, and educator, Dave was an irreplaceable, inimitable creative genius, the ultimate inventor of creative forms.

David Jennings Patrick Morice was born in St. Louis, Missouri, September 10, 1946, the first of five children of Lillian Gertrude Murray and Gilbert Jennings Morice. He is survived by his son Daniel Morice-Quijada, grandson Samuel Andres Morice Bello, daughter-in-law Susana Bello Salvo, sisters Delaine Morice and Jeanne Morice, brother Craig Morice, lifetime friend Milagros Stevens and partner Mary Jo Dane. He was preceded in death by his parents and beloved sister Michelle.

Dave came to Iowa City in 1969 to attend the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop as a graduate student where he and like-minded poets formed the Actualist Poetry Movement, a group of poetic rebels. He was a creative genius of incomprehensible proportions as a poet, artist and inventor of innovative, eclectic, practical and gloriously impractical artistic expression.

Best known as the legendary Dr. Alphabet, he is remembered for the poetry performance art period of his life in bronze on a story wall entitled "A Mark was Made," installed in the Black Hawk Mini Park area of the Downtown Pedestrian Mall in his beloved adopted hometown of Iowa City. He breathed life into "Poetry City" with his long list of poetry marathons that included wrapping a city block in poems, writing a poem off the top of the Jefferson Building, crafting a poem across a football field, and even writing 100 pages a day for 100 days to make the world's longest poem in the heart of the university library. He also penned one of the greatest literary hoaxes under the name Joyce Holland played by his girlfriend Pat Casteel, garnering a following of Joyce Holland fans. One of his proudest accomplishments was creating the famous saying, "Is this Heaven? No, it's Iowa."

Dr Alphabet was a poet, novelist, artist, satirist, craftsman, cartoonist, wizard, genius. He had the ability to think backwards, in rhymes, in verse, in reverse, and inside out. The collection of his work spans more than 89 linear feet of the University of Iowa archives. Dr. Alphabet was an extraordinary human being; soft, kind, quietly obsessed, loving in a way that words can't possibly capture. To quote his favorite poem from the thousands written in his generous life:

LOVE POEM FOR HUMAN BEINGS

When we recognize each other

How long do we have to wait?

An informal gathering honoring Dave's life will be held Wednesday, August 26, 2026, at Gay & Ciha Funeral and Cremation Service in Iowa City from 4 pm to 7pm, with a time of sharing beginning at 6:30pm. In keeping with Dave's unpretentious spirit, the gathering will be informal, and friends are encouraged to come comfortably and casually.

In lieu of flowers, a memorial fund has been established in Dave's memory through the funeral home.