

Holly O'Konski Austin

May 21, 2024



Holly O'Konski Austin crossed the threshold between this world and another in the evening on 2/18/2024. She passed in the comfort of her own bed, surrounded by those she loved most, the hewn timbers and filtered light of the yurt she called home, and a forest formed by the memories and dreams of a lady well-loved and a life well-lived.

Born Holly Ann O'Konski 2/4/1950 in Oakland, CA, the first child of A. Holly Hollingsworth and Chester T. O'Konski. After a happy childhood filled with good food, music and lots of horses, Holly veered south for undergraduate + graduate degrees from UCSD; after erudition she roamed the european countryside with a pack on her back and the byways of the Golden State in a Corvaire named Maybelline. On a trip to the Stanislaus River Holly met Neal Austin - over the years, love blossomed between them; 1980 planted them in a landscape of surreal beauty where the Smith River skirts the Siskiyoues. Three years later they married, and a son joined them in 1984.

Holly's passion for uplifting self-expression and underwriting creativity found a worthy outlet beginning in 1989: as Executive Director of DNACA, Holly sought to celebrate all the arts, not just those she practiced.

After >20 years of her stewardship, DNACA had doubled its programs --- Artists worked alongside Holly to elevate self-expression from grade schools to master classes, from state prison walls to the Veterans' Hall.

In retirement, Holly traveled: with her husband to France, Norway and many more cruise ports of call; with her son to New Orleans, Paris, Mexico City, all across Portugal and Spain. These travels fed her soul; when Holly's body could travel no more, her mind soared in flights of memory and floated on rivers of recall running to the sea.

In the end, the Sarcoma (soft tissue cancer) she had held at bay for years overtook her Feb. 18th, 2024.

Holly is survived by her loving husband Neal Jay- and son Jay Sterling Austin, and by her brothers (and their families): Brian O'Konski; Mark & Jody with son Sam O'Konski; and Tim O'Konski and Susan Meade (with their children Patrick & Cedar O'Konski as well as son Alex, his wife Shannan and son Luke O'Konski).

A Celebration of Life was held May 11th, 2024. Photo tribute + Memorial donation link to cure Sarcoma at www.linktr.ee/HollyOAustin.