

LaDONNA SHEA OBITUARY

After successfully battling multiple myeloma for many years, LaDonna R. Shea succumbed to a rapid upsurge in the disease on November 16 at the Anschutz Hospital in Denver. Even when she endured grueling therapy, she never complained if she could see friends, fun and adventure on the other side. During her last few weeks she could be seen going for long walks on the Anschutz campus with Michael, her husband of 42 years, and her IV medication pole, which she referred to as R2 D2. LaDonna was born in Minnesota to Don and Harriet Reiner. At her age four the family moved to California where she grew up in Whittier and Glendora, where she was the 1966 Miss Glendora. She loved walking in the hills and horseback riding. She attended UCLA and graduated in 1970 with a BA in theatre arts. She considered her degree a prerequisite for her airline career because she could fly all over the world and see great plays. After graduation she joined Pan Am as a flight attendant. She lived briefly in NYC and Santa Monica before moving to Honolulu where she lived for 18 years. In Hawaii she especially enjoyed sailing (she won a Hawaii Yacht Club Wahini Invitational trophy in 1979), spinnaker flying, and kayaking, kayaking the north shores of Oahu, Kauai and Molokai despite the admonition of a young Molokai boy that if she did the north shore in that kayak she would end up "dead meat". Having been scuba certified at UCLA she enjoyed diving from the Hawaiian Islands, Fiji, Palau and Truk to Mexico and the Antilles. LaDonna loved the airline industry, so when the first and then the second woman were hired as pilots she went straight to the airport and started pilot training. Within a year she was flying for smaller operations,

including Scenic Air and Air Molokai, where she flew the last DC 3 in regular passenger service in the United States. An inspiring pioneer in women's aviation, she went on to fly L-1011 first officer and DC-9 captain for Hawaiian Air and 747 first officer and 737 captain for United. In 1994 she was transferred to Denver and she and her husband moved to Boulder. LaDonna embraced Colorado life, improving her downhill skiing and taking up nordic, where she climbed to level 3 certified ski instructor. She and her husband raised black angus cattle. She particularly enjoyed riding her Harley around the west, hiking, fourteening, kayaking, paddle boarding, shooting with Denver SWAT, square dancing, the Bolder Boulder, and throwing political parties for Mark Udall and Ken Salazar (partying was another skill acquired at UCLA). LaDonna loved walking with her 4 dogs over 17 years and volunteered with many organizations, including Meals on Wheels, Victim Advocates, Longmont Buddhist Temple, Conference on World Affairs, and a wild bird rehabilitation center where she was the only volunteer who could safely feed Cookie the owl. LaDonna was a joy to be around, brightening every encounter with her smile, grace, humor and cheerful irreverence. Her death brought condolences from all over the world, phone calls inevitably ending with laughter through the tears over shared memories of the delightfully unique LaDonna. LaDonna was predeceased by her parents and sisters Shelley and Ros, and survived by her husband, sister Wendy, niece Jennifer, and nephews Joel, Jerry and Jeff, and two of her devoted dogs. In lieu of flowers, gifts can be made in her honor to the Humane Society of Boulder Valley. A memorial service is being planned for January in Boulder, and celebration of life happy hours will be planned beginning in the spring in Boulder, Honolulu and Mexico.