



Marlene Helen Lentz

March 1, 1942 - September 30, 2014

Marlene Lentz died September 30, 2014 after a courageous struggle with breast cancer. She was born March 1, 1942 in Latrobe, PA to John and Helen Wasco, who taught her to be independent, generous, and kind. She graduated in 1959 from Latrobe High School, where she was a majorette and was social and popular. She loved to dance and won a dance contest for the "twist." After high school she worked for Bell Telephone and then attended Seton Hill University before studying sociology at Ohio University. In 1963 she married fellow Latrobe native Daniel Lentz, a composer. In 1965 they had a daughter, Medeighnia, with whom Marlene would share a close lifelong bond. The young family lived briefly in Boston, spent a year abroad in Sweden, and then moved to Santa Barbara in 1968.

Marlene loved Santa Barbara and was active in the community from day one. She had a deep interest in the arts and was a frequent presence at the Public Library, Museum of Art, and UCSB Arts and Lectures. She was also a regular at Adult Ed, the Farmer's Market, and the Montecito YMCA. Marlene worked as a manager for the Irving Laucks Foundation and the Mott Foundation, at Phoenix House, and later started Sunflower Services for senior care. She also worked the polls for elections. In 1990 Marlene met John Shute, a local fire captain, and they developed a long and loving relationship. Marlene loved all living things: plants, flowers, and all animals, especially dogs. She literally would not hurt a fly. With her bright blue eyes and beautiful smile, Marlene was a ray of sunshine in any room. She also loved to travel, and enjoyed many trips to Europe, Russia, and China.

Above all, Marlene was a giver. She was the most selfless person any of us ever knew. She had a boundless circle of friends and was unfailingly generous with her time and attention. Her extensive volunteer work included the SB Humane Society and Downtown Organization.

Marlene was a whirlwind, always in motion. But among all her interests, family was foremost. She was a devoted mother to Medeighnia and doting grandmother to Dane and Caden. She was always there for sporting events and school performances, beaming with pride and dispensing postgame hugs. She especially filled holidays with fun and celebration.

A funeral mass will be held at Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Tuesday, October 7 at 11 a.m. The family will also hold a celebration of life at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Dog Adoption and Welfare Group (D.A.W.G.). Marlene was preceded in death by parents John and Helen Wasco of Latrobe. She is survived by her sister Joanne (and husband Russ) Hellein of Latrobe; and her daughter Medeighnia (Peter) Westwick, grandsons Dane and Caden Westwick, and longtime partner John Shute, all of Santa Barbara. Her "grand-dog" Branford will also miss her deeply.