



Carol Briano McLafferty

December 21, 1949 - January 27, 2026

Carol Briano McLafferty 12/21/49-1/27/26

Carol Briano McLafferty passed away on January 27th, 2026, at the age of 76, in Santa Barbara, California. She was surrounded by her friends and family when she passed after enduring a long and courageous 26-year battle with breast cancer.

Carol was born on December 21, 1949, in Montebello, CA, the first child to parents Lupe and John Briano, the same day as her mother's birthday-earning her the affectionate nickname "Christmas Carol". Her early childhood years were spent in El Monte, CA, until the age of 6, when her family moved to Porterville, CA. She loved school and knew from an early age that she wanted to be a teacher. She also participated in 4-H and Roma Lodge Sons of Italy and enjoyed life on the family farm with her two sisters. She graduated from Porterville High School in 1967, attended Porterville College for two years, and then transferred to the University of California, Santa Barbara. She graduated in 1971 with a major in History and minor in Italian, then completed graduate school at UCSB, receiving her teaching credential and becoming an elementary school teacher.

Although Carol wanted to teach the older elementary school children, she was assigned to kindergarten and first grade. She first thought kindergartners were like puppies trying to escape a box, but she quickly fell in love with teaching kindergarten and her students. She delighted in regaling people of stories of her students, including their many mishaps and unforgettable moments:

“Teacher, Teacher, my lunch is leaking!” or “ I am making Soup!”, and the occasional removal of a child from under the record table.

It was in Santa Barbara where Carol met Bill McLafferty, whom she always described as the most interesting man she had ever met, which was quite the compliment. They married in 1981 at the Santa Barbara Mission during the Thanksgiving holiday. Bill had assured Carol that Thanksgiving was always a beautiful weekend of weather in Santa Barbara, only for it to rain on their wedding day. Despite the rain, they had a long and happy marriage, until Bill passed away in 2010.

After 10 years of teaching at Ellwood, Brandon, Hope, and Montecito Union schools, Carol left teaching to be a stay-at-home mom. Carol and Bill raised their four children in Tecolote Canyon in Goleta. Carol spent hours volunteering at schools, running each kid back and forth to sports, rehearsals, and dance classes in her classic teal minivan. She also loved spending time in her backyard curating her orchard of fruit trees, lush landscaping, and vegetable garden.

Carol was a long-time parishioner of St. Raphael’s Catholic Church in Goleta, and loved being part of the community, assisting the Knights of Columbus with dinners, attending pancake breakfasts and Lenten fish fries, working the Fiesta coke booth, and her favorite, bowling and serving as president in the St. Raphael’s bowling league.

Carol was someone who always lit up a room when she entered- usually late. You could hear her powerful voice and laugh from miles away. She always had some great story to tell and an extraordinary ability to connect with people. Nobody could match her memory, and she could tell you your own family history better than you could. One of her earliest memories dated back to when she was just three years old when her finger was stuck in a beer can and had to be cut free. She could recount every detail of that day- what happened and in what order.

Carol loved life and loved being around people. She was never one to wait quietly in the corner waiting for someone to come talk to her, she was the

person that came in loudly, see you, and would talk to you all night if she could. She gave sound advice, shared stories from the past, or asked questions to completely understand who you were, where you were from, and who you were related to. Carol was also a gifted cook and entertainer and loved hosting dinner parties and holiday gatherings. She was famous for her St. Patrick's Day dinner and her desserts. She continued to be involved in education as a member of the board of trustees of a private classic academy high school in Santa Barbara and was an educational consultant for Discovery Toys.

Carol cherished her role as "Lala Carol" to her sister's nine grandchildren, always sending cards, greetings, and personalized singing video messages from her iPad to celebrate their birthdays. Whenever possible, she traveled to celebrate their birthdays and treasured spending time with family.

Carol will be forever missed by her friends and family and forever in our hearts.

She is survived by her children: her eldest daughter, Anna Lisa (Ruben Cuellar), who is expecting a child in March; her daughters Angela and Francesca; and her son, John. She is also survived by her sisters, Kathy Briano (Larry Dutto) and Giovanna DePaoli (David), her nieces and nephews, their children, and by her beloved cat, Rusty, who was her favorite companion. She was preceded in death by her husband, Bill McLafferty.

Visitation will be held at Welch-Ryce-Haider Funeral Chapel, 450 Ward Drive, Goleta, CA on Friday, February 6th from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM followed by the recitation of the Holy Rosary at 7:00 PM. A mass will be celebrated at St. Raphael's Catholic Church in Goleta at 10:00 AM, Saturday, February 7th followed by burial services at Calvary Cemetery, 199 N. Hope Ave, Santa Barbara, CA. Reception will be held after at the EMID Community Center.

Cemetery Details

Calvary Cemetery

199 North Hope Ave
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
(805) 687-8811
http://www.archdiocese.la/directories/cemeteries/info.php?cemetery_id=3

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 6. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (PT)

Welch-Ryce-Haider Funeral Chapels and Crematorium
450 Ward Dr.
Santa Barbara, CA 93111
inf@wrhsb.com
<http://wrhsb.com>

Holy Rosary

FEB 6. 7:00 PM (PT)

Welch-Ryce-Haider - Goleta
450 Ward Drive
Santa Barbara, CA 93111
(805) 965-5145
info@wrhsb.com
<https://www.wrhsb.com>

Funeral Mass

FEB 7. 10:00 AM (PT)

St. Raphael Catholic Church
5444 Hollister Ave.
Santa Barbara, CA 93111
<http://www.straphaelsb.com/>