



Leslie Hollis López

December 12, 1944 - March 8, 2025

Leslie Hollis López passed away peacefully in her home in Montecito on March 8, 2025. She was surrounded by family members until the very end: a beautiful, sunny Santa Barbara day spent listening to The Beatles, Claude Debussy and John Barry. Leslie was an adoring wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and a devoted friend to many. A force of nature both personally and professionally, she brought palpable warmth and sparkle to every person and project she touched.

Born 'Holly Ann' Hollis in Chicago, Illinois, on December 12, 1944, Leslie moved to Bakersfield, California at the age of two with her parents, Eleanor Judith and Raymond Marvin Hollis. Older sister to Patty and Shelly and younger brother Stan, Leslie was a natural leader and captain of fun. She loved roller skating and riding her bike around the neighborhood with her siblings, creating magic shows and circus events and even sold tickets to these performances to friends. In quieter moments, Leslie could be found at her local library, voraciously reading books every Saturday. Sundays were spent attending Catholic mass with her family, followed by helping her parents in the garden. It was here that Leslie's love of arranging freshly-cut flowers, particularly delicate white blooms, first took root. After graduating from Garces Memorial High School, where she was a straight-A student and popular classmate, Leslie married her first husband, her high-school sweetheart, and

moved to Santa Barbara for college.

Leslie met her second husband, Carlos, in Guadalajara, México while on an educational trip with friends. After a whirlwind romance, they married two weeks later in Sausalito, California in 1970. The two lived in México for a year while Carlos completed his Architectural degree at the Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara. Leslie thrived immersing herself in the local culture, learning the language and the customs of her husband's native country, and brought the warmth and vitality of México to the couple's first home in Goleta in 1971. Ever the entrepreneur, and always with a keen eye for beauty, she opened an eponymous antique store called 'The Holly House' on Brinkerhoff Avenue, a landmark district in downtown Santa Barbara. Leslie then launched a long and successful real estate career, first working for Lee Cory Company on State Street before moving to Pitts & Bachmann, and later to Sotheby's International Realty in Montecito's Upper Village.

In 1978, Leslie and Carlos took a wild leap into the world of restaurant ownership. Using her travels to México as inspiration, along with her husband's family recipes as a waymark, the couple created a Mexican establishment on State Street. It was a perfect partnership. Leslie presided over the front of the house, creating menus and speciality drinks, training employees and decorating, while Carlos managed the kitchen staff and back office. Over 46 years later, Carlitos Café y Cantina remains due to Leslie's vision, tremendous attention to detail and rigorous work ethic.

Leslie believed in the power of community, taking steps to ensure that Carlitos and the neighboring businesses around it would thrive. She was a founding member of ARTS District Santa Barbara, where she excitedly volunteered her thoughtful insights and positive attitude. She loved channeling her creative energies into everything from logo designs to planning events to help promote independent

shops and artisans in her beloved long-time neighborhood. Leslie's work on this new endeavor brought her a great deal of joy and gratification.

Leslie also served as a board member of Antigua Pines Owners Association in 1995, using her real estate expertise and financial focus to support all business aspects of the Association, and served as President of the Board for a combined six years, ending in October 2024. Her exceptional interpersonal skills helped build relationships with a generation of owners in the beautiful enclave near Butterfly Beach, Montecito.

Leslie loved the phrase "Knowledge is Power" and always motivated her children to explore their horizons and challenge the status-quo. She fiercely nurtured and protected them and always went the extra mile to enable their education and broaden their worldview. She instilled in them a thirst for adventure, an appreciation of the arts, a love of music and an entrepreneurial mindset.

Always curating a fun party full of her favorite flowers, custom playlists and favorite wines, Leslie treasured her family's many holiday functions, where her festive, fastidious spirit shone brightly. In all areas of her life, Leslie was generous, cheerful, vivacious and empathetic.

A lifelong passionate traveler, Leslie went on many European excursions that made lasting memories for all those around her, leaving a deep impact on her family. Exploring the world, collecting beautiful recuerdos and enjoying extraordinary experiences was something she especially enjoyed with Carlos and her closest compadres. She was thrilled to celebrate her 80th birthday this past December in her favorite city in the world: Paris, France. She

delighted in being with her husband, children, grandchildren and many friends from different countries in the City of Light for this momentous occasion.

Leslie will always be remembered for being a supremely talented individual; an energetic businesswoman, an engaging hostess, a determined fighter and a devoted mother. She was lovely, dynamic, incredibly tough and lived life with a wonderful joie de vivre.

Leslie is survived by her husband of almost 55 years, Carlos S. López, their two children, Amy Marisa Balducci (Charles) and Carlos López-Hollis (Amanda), her children Tracy Rush (Benny), Michael Rush, Tricia Rush (Mario), 12 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren and her sister, Rochelle Marie Hollis.

Friends and family are welcomed to the following services in honor of Leslie: Visitation & Rosary, Monday, March 17th 6:00 - 8:00 PM, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Montecito

Funeral Mass, Tuesday, March 18th 9:00 AM, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Montecito

Followed by a Graveside Service and Celebration of Leslie's life.

Arrangements: Welch-Ryce-Haider Funeral Home

Florals: Hogue & Co.

Donations in Leslie's name can be made to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.

Cemetery Details

Santa Barbara Cemetery

901 Channel Drive
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
(805) 969-3231

Previous Events

Rosary

MAR 17. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (PT)

Mt. Carmel Catholic Church
1300 E Valley Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93108

Funeral Mass

MAR 18. 9:00 AM (PT)

Mt. Carmel Catholic Church
1300 E Valley Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93108