



Elizabeth "Liz" Eckel Neff

July 24, 2019

Elizabeth "Liz" Eckel Neff, 63, passed away on July 24, 2019, at UCHealth Poudre Valley Hospital in Fort Collins, Colorado after surgical complications.

To have known Liz is to have loved her. She had a great sense of humor that could make even the most serious person smile. Her huge heart and generous spirit made the world a better place. Grieving survivors include her husband Ted Neff; daughter Sara Smolenksy and husband Matthew of Dallas, TX; sons Ted and William Neff of Fort Collins; granddaughter Ella Smolensky; siblings Pamela Clifford and husband Brian and Margaretta Svendson and husband Don; numerous nieces and nephews; and dogs, Baby, a rescued pit bull, and Greta, a German shepherd.

Liz was born in 1956 in New Brunswick, New Jersey to William and Jane Eckel. She and her five siblings grew up in South America, where her father worked with General Motors and Chrysler. In 1979, after graduating from Rutgers University (Douglass College) with a Bachelor's Degree in Communications, she moved to Florida to be with her sister, Maggie. It was there that she met Ted. They married in 1981 at her parents' home in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. When Ted got a new job at Hewlett-Packard in 1984, they moved to Colorado Springs. Their current house in Fort Collins has been home for nearly 30 years. All three children were raised there and their two sons now live just down the street.

Early in her career, Liz worked as a legal secretary, but because she adored being a mother, she chose to stay at home and raise her children. Nothing made her more proud than seeing her children succeed and be happy. That joy was immeasurably increased with the birth of her granddaughter Ella in 2017. Theirs was a special bond. They saw each other as often as possible, spending hours at a time reading together.

As her children got older, Liz rejoined the workforce and held a variety of jobs including volunteering at the Larimer County Humane Society. Later she was able to capitalize on her love of reading by working for many years as an Assistant Circulation Supervisor for the Poudre River Public Library District.

In addition to reading, Liz loved to walk and often hiked for miles with her devoted dogs. She would spend hours exploring her property in the mountains, totally absorbed in nature's beauty. She was always a very active person, even playing ice hockey in an adult league for a couple of seasons. She loved cheering for the Broncos, Avalanche, and, most importantly, her sons' hockey teams.

Liz was preceded in death by her parents William and Jane Eckel; brothers William, John, and Michael; and dogs Elsa, Meggie, Sally, and Hannah.

A celebration of Liz's life will be held Saturday, August 10 from 11am-2pm at one of her favorite places, Cafe Vino in Fort Collins. Friends and loved ones are invited to come at any time during the reception. The family will hold a private service at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a gift to Bounce Animal Rescue.

<https://bouncenanimalrescue.org/donate-today/>

Below is a piece from 2016 that Liz wrote for her "Staff Spotlight" at Poudre River Public Library District (PRPLD).

This is my life, Elizabeth Neff
PRPLD Staff Spotlight

I was supposed to be born in Mexico City where my parents lived, but fearing complications, they flew back to New Brunswick, NJ where I was born "practically perfect in every way" (Mary Poppins) at St. Peter's Hospital, the same hospital my good friend and co-worker, Kathleen Lewis, was born. Yes, we're both Jersey girls.

At five weeks old, I made the journey back to Mexico City, where my dad worked for General Motors. I remember nothing of Mexico except that I have an unusual affinity for dachshunds; unusual since all my dogs are large. Learned later we had five dachshunds in Mexico. Guess I remembered something! We were essentially raised by maids, so my first language was Spanish, which made my grandmother very nervous. She never knew what I was yammering for... "Galleta, galleta." Cookie, of course. Regarding maids, my mother initially did not want them but was told by a Mexican neighbor that it was her duty to hire a maid, and, in fact, as many maids as we could afford since we provided them with a good living, especially since Americans paid better and treated them well. The maids were always our very good friends, more like brothers and sisters. We hung out with them in the kitchen all the time and they taught us Spanish songs and games.

On to Caracas, Venezuela, where my dad worked for Chrysler. Memories: Venezuelans roller skating down the streets on Christmas morning singing carols; political candidates each with a different color and song, and the people wearing their colors and singing their songs in the streets; riding in a car and having my head pushed down to the floor as the police in one vehicle shot at another vehicle ostensibly filled with Communists; waiting for the horse man to come by to strap us kids on top of the horses and clattering down the streets of Caracas; sitting in the principal's office forlornly looking out the window at the black and white anteater who would visit the school grounds. I still don't know what I ever did to be there.

Six years later...Bogota, Colombia. I remember the distinct feeling (even as a kid) that life was cheap in Colombia. On the way home from the airport on our first day there we saw a pedestrian hit and killed by the car in front of us. Another time a policeman pulled out his gun and shot a dog on the sidewalk. We were in our car and saw the dog later, injured and running, running. There was lots of poverty in Venezuela and Colombia. I remember shacks with tin roofs on the hillsides and beautiful mansions in lovely neighborhoods. Colombia also meant freedom; my dad had a new position and lots of responsibilities and my mom was busy entertaining, so the kids were let loose. We ran all over the city getting into scrapes and daring each other to do very stupid things... I'm surprised I survived to 11. My mother never knew what we were up to. Our Colombian neighbors would tell her it wasn't safe to let us run around, as Americans were being kidnapped, but she had six kids... plenty to spare. Once again, I was in the principal's office quite a bit, however, unlike Venezuela, I do remember what I did in Colombia. My friends and I were quite obnoxious. When we left Colombia my friend wrote me that the teacher would call her Liz. When she said, "My name's not Liz," the teacher would reply, "If you act like a Liz, you get called Liz." Yikes!

Our next move took us to Santiago, Chile. Santiago was very different from Caracas and Bogota. It was quite European and had less poverty. I was a lot calmer in Chile but my older brother and sister got into a lot of trouble. They were part of Chilean student rebellions against the government in the streets of Santiago. While they were plotting to overthrow the government and getting hosed by water cannons, I was plotting revenge against Gustavo Martinez for mashing gum into my hair. Essentially the political climate was changing in Chile and corporations were moving their people out. Back to the U.S.

Our introduction to American culture was very shocking and difficult. There were many cliques in school, something we had never encountered before, since the schools in South America were international and the population was diverse and always changing.

Everyone was a newcomer. I figured it out though and survived. College (Rutgers) was a blast.

After college I moved to Tampa, FL to be with my sister. She dragged me to a party my first night there. I was tired and didn't want to go but perked up when I walked into a room and saw a beautiful boy playing the best classical guitar I had ever heard outside of a professional. I was smitten. It took him a year to be smitten back but smitten he was, and he became my husband, Ted. We moved to CO when he graduated and got a job at HP.

We've been blessed with three kids. The picture above is of Sara's recent wedding. Teddy is on the left, William is on the right. Sara is an ICU pediatric nurse in Dallas, Teddy is our entrepreneur (has a game on iPhone and Android) and Will plays hockey for CSU. I love to read... *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Gabriel Garcia Marquez), *Henderson the Rain King* (Saul Bellow) and *Catcher in the Rye* (J.D. Salinger) are my favorites. When not reading I'm hiking with my dogs, binge watching TV, and tending to my hard-fought, long-suffering Christian faith. That "love your neighbor as yourself" is my bane. A work in progress.

Comments



“ Riley and I are deeply saddened by the loss of Liz. Always with a smile, it was clear she had a strong affection for our girls (the dog included). She thoughtfully left (too many ;)) treats for all three on our doorstep each Halloween. Quick with a greeting and a wave, she made us feel welcome when we arrived to the neighborhood. Our hearts ache for all who loved Liz. We've made a donation to Bounce Animal Rescue in honor of her memory. We would also like to extend a very sincere offer to help with Greta and Baby if ever the need arises.

In Love and Light,
Melinda, Riley, Ruby, and Clara Phipps

Melinda Renee - August 11, 2019 at 01:24 PM



“ Ted. So sorry to hear about the loss of your wife. You will be in my thoughts and prayers.

David Haining - August 10, 2019 at 10:22 AM



“ Hi Ted, I am sorry to hear of your loss of Liz. What an awesome family, example and legacy she left. Thank you for sharing her thoughts and experiences. Prayer offered for you and family.

Chris Moehring - August 09, 2019 at 03:06 PM



“ Heidi Green lit a candle in memory of Elizabeth "Liz" Eckel Neff



Heidi Green - August 09, 2019 at 10:54 AM



“ I'm so saddened to hear this. I loved every time I got to hang out with Liz. My heart goes out to Ted and the entire family.

Suzanne Pherigo - August 06, 2019 at 04:01 PM



“ This is a complete shock. Liz was always such a vibrant person. Our deepest condolences.

Jason and Susan Goldman

Jason Goldman - August 06, 2019 at 11:10 AM



“ So sorry to hear of this, dear hockey family. Our thoughts and healing wishes are with you.

Shawn Mallory - August 06, 2019 at 10:58 AM



“ We remember Liz and your family very well. We are very sad and sorry for your loss.

Mary, Joe, Ann and Steven Solomon

Mary Solomon - August 06, 2019 at 08:51 AM



“ I am so saddened to hear of the loss of your beloved Liz! I can remember meeting her a couple of times many, many years ago. The beautiful Eckels. My mother Blanche always talks about how she mostly hung out with her cousin Jane (Liz's mother) and her sister Jeanne growing up, how she wanted to be just like them and to be as beautiful as they were. Sending love and deepest condolences to her family. Rest at the Heavenly banquet Liz

Amanda Gandolf - August 05, 2019 at 08:17 PM



“ I knew Liz through hockey, Parker and Will played together for many years. She drove the four of us up to Steamboat for a tournament and the weather was horrible, it took us 5 hours. She had her big suburban type car and outside of Walden she was baha-ing through 3 foot drifts. It was so scary at the time - but we laughed about it later - it was like being in a commercial for some off road vehicle.

I adored this lady, we went on many a long walk together waiting for the boys to play hockey. Liz you will be missed - your infectious smile and beautiful blonde hair!

CATHERINE FAWCETT - August 05, 2019 at 05:57 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Goes Funeral Care & Crematory - August 05, 2019 at 10:08 AM