



Mary Hill

May 29, 2021

Mary Hill, formerly Mary Hagberg or Mary Croissant, age 72, died at her home in Fort Collins, CO, on May 29, 2021, from pancreatic cancer.

Mary was a woman of many names and many talents. Born in 1948 in Michigan to parents Ken and Cornelia Hagberg, she lived there with her parents and younger sister Kristin throughout her childhood. As a child she took ballet and piano lessons – interests she would carry into adulthood – worked hard in school, and spent summers at her beloved Camp Miniwanca. Her early adulthood was spent pursuing higher education and she earned her PhD in sociology from the University of Illinois Champagne-Urbana in 1977. She became a mother when her daughter Carolyn was born in 1982, and she and Carolyn were joined by son Kenny in 1984.

The middle section of Mary's life centered itself around care for children. Kenny was left profoundly brain injured by an injury in early infancy and required complex medical care his whole life. Not expected to live to age 6, through Mary's efforts he made it to age 26, surrounded always by his family, pets, and loving caregivers. Mary was a tireless advocate for him. She participated in intensive therapy regimes, managed dozens of volunteers who came in to help with his needs, research treatment options, and ensured his needs were met in the educational system, all while keeping an eye on his quality of life and happiness.

Carolyn was not neglected during all this. When the public schools turned out not to be a good fit Mary decided to homeschool Carolyn--a job she did so well, that Carolyn graduated with her Associates Degree at age 17 before going on to graduate Summa Cum Laude from CSU and to receive her own doctorate in English from Tufts University. Mary supported Carolyn in her intensive study of ballet, nurtured her love of literature and art, and embraced her many friends with open arms.

Mary returned to the workforce as a professor of sociology at Front Range Community College (FRCC) in 1992. She taught part-time until 2000, at which point she became full-

time and ran FRCC's sociology program until her retirement in December of 2016. She inspired countless students in her over 20 years at FRCC, many of whom attribute to Mary some of their success and joy in later academic and life achievements. During her tenure she served as Faculty Senate President and was voted Master Teacher. In 2014, she also founded FRCC's on-campus food pantry, "Food for Thought", to address food insecurity amongst the student body.

Mary was an active member of Foothills Unitarian Universalist Church, where she served on many committees, participated enthusiastically in congregational life, and taught religious education classes in the secular and humanist traditions of the church.

Messages received at the time of her death show that Mary loved widely and well and is remembered not only by her family but also by her children's friends, religious education students, and academic students as someone who modeled for them what an exuberant, engaged, and adventurous adult life could look like.

Mary was someone who embodied the concept of the lifelong learner. A voracious and eclectic reader, she also took up many different hobbies over the course of her life. Piano, ballet, and gardening were lifelong interests but she also loved weaving, pottery, knitting, and needlepoint. Over the past decade, some of her greatest joy came from attending theater productions and museums with her beloved husband John Hill, whom she married in 2011. They brought great joy and love to each other in the course of their too-short union. Another longtime dream late fulfilled came in the form of the several wonderful European trips she and John were able to take together over the course of their marriage.

Mary is survived by her husband, John Hill, of Fort Collins, and by her daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter – Carolyn, Aatish, and Mohini Salvi of Somerville, MA. She is also survived by her stepchildren and their families: Catherine Hill and Chip Grey of Loveland, Colorado, with children Vivienne and Kennedy; and Stephen and Hannah Hill of Seattle, WA, with children Athen, Asher, and Abraham. Her former foster child, Martin Chase, lives in Portland, OR, with his partner and child. Her sister, Kristin Hagberg of Okemos, MI, also survives her, as do her nephew Jacob Romagnoli of Sun Valley, ID and niece Gwen Espinoza of Clarkdale, AZ. She is mourned by countless others, far too numerous to mention here, to whom the family is deeply indebted for all they brought to Mary's life.

Mary is predeceased by her son, Kenneth Knox, and by her parents and stepmother, Cornelia Hagberg, Kenneth Hagberg, and Betty Hagberg, respectively.

Mary was cremated and her ashes will be kept or scattered by her family members as

feels most appropriate to them.

On June 11, 2022 at 11:00 am, followed by a light lunch and an opportunity to share your memories, you are invited to join together at Foothills Unitarian Universalist Church, 1815 Yorktown Ave, Fort Collins, CO. as the Rev. Gretchen Haley, and the Rev. Mark Lee lead this long awaited memorial service for Mary. Memorial contributions can be made to the Mary Hill "Food for Thought" food pantry at Front Range Community College. Simply go to:

<https://www.frontrange.edu/about-frcc/frcc-foundation/giving/give-to-front-range-community-college> and locate the designation menu, then select: Larimer Campus Mary Hill Food Pantry fund.

"You want a physicist to speak at your funeral. You want a physicist to talk [to the mourners] about the conservation of energy so they will understand that your energy has not died... Let [the mourners] know that they can measure, that scientists have measured precisely the conservation of energy and found it accurate, verifiable and consistent across space and time. You can hope your family will examine the evidence and satisfy themselves that the science is sound and that they'll be comforted to know your energy's still around. According to the law of the conservation of energy, not a bit of you is gone; you're just less orderly. Amen." – Aaron Freeman

Comments



“ I was new at FRCC the first time I had contact with Mary. I spoke with her about finding a book for a tutor to borrow, and she sent me to her office (she wasn't on campus) to just take it off her shelf. I was hesitant, but no one in the department seemed the littlest bit surprised at my request. "Just go in and get it!" As I got to know her more, I understood. I was not surprised, either, to learn that Mary was from Michigan. An old friend of mine once told me that we were friends because us "mid-west girls" were more friendly. I think of that often, and it was certainly true for Mary. Many hugs to you, John, and the rest of the family as well!



Melissa Shay - August 15, 2021 at 06:33 PM



“ I met Mary at the wedding of her daughter Carolyn with my son Aatish. She struck me as an adventurous person ready to try new experiences when she decided to wear a saree to the wedding. The saree is a garment not easy to carry when worn for the first time. I have always admired her ability to face everything that life had thrown at her with dignity and grace. She did not let any downturn affect her sense of humor and fun. May she find peace and happiness in her new world.

Niru Salvi - August 07, 2021 at 03:07 AM



“ Todd Sheaman lit a candle in memory of Mary Hill



Todd Sheaman - August 06, 2021 at 11:38 PM



“ Dear Carolyn and all, since I heard that Mary had passed away I've been thinking of a time as a teenager that I was camping with you, your mother, a couple of other parents, and several other YRUU friends. The kids stayed up nearly all night, and I was afraid that the adults would be mad at us for keeping them awake with our noise. Instead, in the morning Mary said something like, "how wonderful to hear you all laughing and enjoying each other's company last night!" It has stuck with me, and showed me an attitude I try to cultivate to this day. I am so sorry for your loss and wish you any comfort you can find. With love from Allison Churnside.

Allison Churnside - August 06, 2021 at 12:59 PM



“ I just found photos from that trip! I'll find a way to send you some copies. :)

Carolyn - August 08, 2021 at 10:19 AM