



Diane Burton

November 20, 2023

Diane Burton, née Dixon, passed away at her home in Fort Collins, Colorado on November 20th, 2023, the day after the local used bookstore went out of business and left her family puzzled as to what to do with her vast curated library.

Diane was born in 1947 and grew up in Mount Washington in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania the eldest of eight children. Her childhood was spent being scolded by the nuns at St. Mary of the Mount for offenses such as ruining her communion dress while playing in the mud. In high school, to help support her widowed mother, she worked for the Kschier Brothers trying (but failing) to convince the business to invoice their customers for violin repairs. She carried a love of music all her life, and along with so many things, this love was a gift she passed on to her children. When asked which legendary artists she saw in concert during the sixties, she answered “all of them.” Sadly, she discovered shortly before her death that she did not actually attend Woodstock as she’d always believed but took the news rather well. She did, however, continue to attend concerts regularly at many Colorado venues, including Red Rocks Amphitheater, a personal favorite.

Diane believed strongly in higher education. Although she was unable to pursue post-secondary education immediately following high school, she pursued her college education gradually as a mother and full-time secretary.

She graduated Summa cum Laude from The University of Pittsburgh in 1988 with a bachelor's degree in media communications and political science, the same year her oldest child graduated from high school. She later received her master's degree in government from William and Mary in 1992, the same year her youngest child was born. She was fiercely determined about the things that mattered most to her. She was proud that all her children surpassed her in education. Diane loved being surrounded by learning, working in administrative positions at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, and teaching government courses at community colleges (Thomas Nelson in Hampton, Virginia and Front Range in Fort Collins, Colorado). At CSU, she worked as the assistant director of the University Honors Program and other positions for nearly twenty years. Diane helped thousands of students on their educational journey. Many of those have remarked that she was most helpful with her directness and honesty. In advising students, she was always authentic, loving, and kind. It was nearly impossible to go anywhere in Fort Collins without someone approaching Diane, usually previous students, telling her how important and memorable she had been in their life. She had an exceptionally strong work ethic and stated that every job she left required at least two people to fill it after she was gone. Her family could never imagine a reason to challenge her claim. Surprising everyone who knew her, she eventually retired from CSU during the COVID pandemic.

Diane was a woman with many passions and interests. She was an avid reader throughout her life. She was also an excellent writer having spent some time early in her career writing for a local newspaper. Frequently, her family was punished by her red pen, with her editing of their work but she never failed to improve the end product. She was an avid bicyclist for decades, commuting along arduous routes in hilly Pittsburgh long before it was fashionable or easily done like on the planned paths of today. She continued to ride her bike to CSU regularly until retirement. Diane was most

adventurous and loved to travel. As a young adult, she considered a career as a stewardess (now flight attendant) but was denied because she was too short. She stated regularly that she was retired, had a passport and money, and would take a trip anywhere with anyone who had a travel idea. She loved living in and exploring Colorado as well. Throughout her life she loved the woods. At every opportunity she would go hiking or camping with her family, which included a string of misbehaved golden retrievers. She sought tirelessly to support the plant world with hundreds of pampered indoor plants and spent months of effort each year selecting the perfect plants from local nurseries to create and maintain a park-like oasis in her backyard. Denied the opportunity earlier in life to pursue forestry as a career, she decided to spend the largest amount of her brief retirement volunteering for various tree nurseries and forest restoration projects. She even became a certified sawyer, operating her own chainsaw at 75 years old. As a sawyer, she assisted with numerous fire restoration projects, controlled burns, and trail maintenance in natural areas. Diane jumped into retirement with the same gusto she exhibited during her working career, with her family believing she was even busier in retirement than she was while fully employed. She volunteered generously, and shared her time, amazing energy, and positive attitude with many organizations, including the Food Bank for Larimer County, Neighbor to Neighbor, The Gardens on Spring Creek, The Poudre River Friends of the Library, The Colorado State Forest Service Nursery, and NOCO Sawyers, partnering with many organizations including Wildlands Restoration Volunteers and Colorado Addicted Trailbuilders Society.

Diane is survived by her chainsaws (unnamed), golden retriever (Jack), siblings (Colleen Carr, Regis Dixon, Jane Dixon Miller, Mark Dixon, Julie Cormack, and Rita Basista), children (Kristine Callahan, Lauren Burton, and Timothy Burton), grandchildren (Abbie Callahan and Evan Callahan), grand dogs (Sadie, Willow, Frankie and Remy), and husband (W. Scott Burton). She

is predeceased by her parents Lillian and John B. Dixon Jr, as well as her brother Jake Dixon. In addition she leaves behind 178 well-loved houseplants (really, and this is after giving many away in recent months to most anyone who visited her), some of which have been with her since she lived in Pittsburgh, a minimum of two large bookshelves per room, and an accumulation of “treasures” found at the Arc Thrift Store on half priced Saturdays. Tragically, her tuna casserole recipe is lost to time, but those interested would be advised that it included canned cream of mushroom and did not contain vegetables. She also leaves behind the following advice - passed down from her mother: if your underpants start falling down in public, just let ‘em drop and keep on walking.

Per her wishes, a commemoration of her life will be held in the spring or summer of 2024 when weather permits an outdoor celebration and activities in nature which were so important to her during life. In lieu of flowers, please donate to any one of the groups she volunteered with, or that supports natural areas or the outdoors. Or please plant a tree in her memory and think of her when you hike.

Please share thoughts, memories, and stories on Diane’s tribute page. Hearing about how Diane touched so many and shone so brightly is an amazing tribute to a life well lived.

Tribute Wall

DA

“ I met Diane during the spring of 2022 while working at the Colorado State Forest Service Nursery. Immediately, she was warm, friendly, funny, and wise. She always worked hard and her passion for the plants was evident, but even more, she loved everyone at the nursery and we all loved her back so dearly. Her unfiltered sense of humor and unserious take on life always left us roaring with laughter, I think that's something I'll always strive to incorporate into my own life. I said it back then and I'll say it again; I hope that I grow up to be even just a fraction as a badass as she was. Her and I grabbed lunch back at the end of July; despite her uphill battle with her cancer, she was still the same Diane. I think we both knew that that was the last time we would see each other, so it was bittersweet, but I feel so fortunate to have met her and will always hold our limited memories together close to my heart. Cheers Diane, I know wherever your soul is, you are making others laugh!

Danika - January 25, 2024 at 11:56 AM

NF

“ I'm so sorry to hear of Diane's passing. She was a champion to so many of our students and I am honored to have worked with her. Her passion for the outdoors and biking to work connected us, and we will always consider her an honorary advisor in the Warner College of Natural Resources because of her interests.

Nikki Foxley - January 17, 2024 at 09:05 PM



“ I met Diane early during my CSU career, over two decades ago. While we never worked in the same office, we interacted frequently throughout the years as we shared many advisees, who majored in HDFS and were also pre-health and/or Honors students. Any time I ran into Diane at meetings or out and about on campus, or connected with her by phone or email, it truly made my day. She was one of my favorite colleagues and I am very sad she has passed on. I pray for peace for her family, friends, and all those she touched so deeply.

Anne Van Arsdall - December 28, 2023 at 09:59 AM

GD

“ I had the pleasure of working with Diane while she was worked in the Center of Life Sciences, when the Center for Life Sciences, HELP/Success and the Retention Office merged (a fun transition), and then when she was an Assistant Director at Honors. She was always so fun to talk with- she was passionate about higher education and also prioritized talking about life. She had so many interests- plants, hiking, biking, reading and chameleons. A special memory was when Domenic (my son) and I saw her chameleons and learned all about the unique reptiles. I admired her for her resilience in her own educational and career path, love for her family, and ability to work full time, teach political science and embrace life to the fullest. She touched the lives of many students and I will always remember her laugh. Cheers to Diane.

Gaye DiGregorio - December 27, 2023 at 11:55 AM

CM

“ *Diane was so spunky and awesome, I will never forget her! She was so welcoming to me when I started my role as an advisor many years ago. She invited me to lunch, and I assumed it would be a working lunch and that there might be an agenda, but Diane just wanted to chat, get to know me and welcome me into the advising community. You will be greatly missed Diane!* ”

Cassidy McLaren - December 22, 2023 at 03:45 PM

KH

“ *Diane's belief in the power of education and her deep love of students was evident in everything she did. She brought to her work intelligence, humor, and complete dedication. I both deeply respected her and was so glad to call her my friend.* ”

Kaye Holman - December 22, 2023 at 10:03 AM

AB

“ *I first worked with Diane in the Center for Life Sciences at CSU. Yes, her office was filled with plants, and she would bring geraniums from home each year to ‘winter’ in Aylesworth Hall! Her energy, curiosity, sense of humor, and the ability to tell the best stories were appreciated and enjoyed by all! She was always straight forward, telling truth in any conversation on any topic and was fiercely supportive of students. She was a person who truly ‘lived’ her life, being present and enjoying each day. I admired her grit, her determination, her honesty and am so grateful for her friendship.* ”

Ann Bowen - December 21, 2023 at 11:37 AM

MI

“ I worked with Diane when she was an advisor in CLS, HELP/Success Center, and Honors. She was honest and frank and left the BEST comments for students. Her humor made my day on numerous occasions.

Thanks so much for baked goods, great read and show recommendations, appreciations for what we collaborated on, and your enormous heart and dedication to students. I'll miss you!

Mike - December 21, 2023 at 11:25 AM

AP

“ I am so sorry to hear of Diane's passing. I never met her in person, but she was my go to person in the Honors Office. I so enjoyed our exchanges. She was a wealth of information and she kept me and my students on track. Her positive can-do outlook resonated with me. Andrea Pury

Andrea Purdy - December 20, 2023 at 07:46 PM

KS

“ So sad to hear this news. Diane and I met when I worked for Campus Recreation at CSU. I left for 8 years and returned to Advising where I had the chance to re-connect with her. My last conversation with her was on the Mason bus before Covid shut down the world. She was so excited to retire and start traveling the world. I hope she got to do some traveling before she passed.....she made such an impact in the CSU community and truly had a passion for working with students.

Karri Smith - December 20, 2023 at 06:04 PM

MW

“ I only had the pleasure of meeting Diane twice: the first time was only two weeks before her diagnosis, and she was not feeling well. Never the less, she was gracious and friendly, fighting through her discomfort. The second time was during her year of treatment. I was taken in by her obvious passion for life, terrific sense of humor, and desire to embrace those she loved at every opportunity. But I also knew OF her, not only from my dear friend, her daughter Kris, but also through several people I know in Fort Collins who knew and respected Diane at CSU. The best thing, I think, someone can say about another human being is, "I wish I'd known her better." And I can honestly say that. Be at peace, Diane, and I hope you find a garden-full of plants to tend to wherever your spirit rests.

Mimi Wahlfeldt - December 19, 2023 at 09:43 PM

LN

“ I loved her energy and how direct she was. She would share anything she was thinking about Loved every moment of chatting with her during RAM Orientation. Diane was a true joy to work with and will be missed

Latoya Noel - December 19, 2023 at 04:30 PM

SC

“ I spent a lot of time struggling on how to best talk about Diane – she just cannot be encapsulated here, in so few words. I had the privilege of working with Diane in the Honors program before she retired, where we would often have the opportunity to talk about everything under the sun. Diane’s favorite subjects were her family, books, and plants – though I heard many varied stories over the years! She would always light up when she spoke of her children, her husband, and her siblings. Diane lent me many books over the years, and would always chat about her current read. After retirement, she would frequently ask me if there was a particular book I wanted that she could look out for when she volunteered at the library, and we would trade secrets about Kindle library books (turn your Kindle on airplane mode if you aren’t done reading when it’s due, and you can continue reading!). I am constantly speaking with students that attribute much of their success to Diane’s advice and help over the years. Many of the plants in my office were left to me by her after she retired – she insisted that she had no more space at home. Her family is in my thoughts – and she is on my mind often.

Shivon Costin - December 19, 2023 at 04:05 PM

AG

“ Dibs on any of those books. I’m sure my own love of reading was influenced by how much time I spent at her house as a child. I feel like there are still lessons I can and will learn from her. Rest easy, auntie Di. You were a force of nature and I miss you already.

Amy Gilbert - December 17, 2023 at 12:01 PM

ME

“ I worked with Diane for several years in the Honors Program at CSU. She was enormously helpful to me. I considered her a friend and an inspiration . While I admired her energy and warmth, what I admired most was her total commitment to the students, their welfare and success. She is missed and remembered with respect and affection.

Mary Elkins - December 17, 2023 at 08:05 AM

BM

“ I knew the Dixon family fairly well back in the sixties. It was a privilege to spend time around the family and I remember Diane as being so enthusiastic about life and so full of energy. My deepest condolences to her siblings and to her husband and children.

Bob Macellaro - December 15, 2023 at 01:54 PM