



**REMEMBERING**  
**Doreen Zaiss**

April 14, 1945 - March 16, 2020



Doreen Henra Coulter Zaiss

On March 16, 2020, Doreen Zaiss died by Medical Assistance in Dying procedure, in her own home, surrounded by friends and family, and on her own terms after living with incurable gastric cancer for just over one year. She left this earth in song and laughter, held up and embraced and we celebrate her choice and her voice in this passing. Doreen was born April 14, 1945 in San Mateo California to John and Joyce Coulter and grew up in Redwood City. She is survived by her three sisters, Karen, Jackie and Becky, who she dearly loved and stayed in regular contact with until the day of her death.

Doreen attended Chico State University where she began her journey down the path of words and language. She was a hungry reader, a clinically accurate grammarian and a decidedly creative force in language and literature.

Doreen met David Zaiss in 1965 at Chico State University in a creative writing class. She finished her junior year at Chico, and then, as if called to her Scandinavian roots with the force of a Viking wind, chose to complete her senior year abroad at Uppsala University in Sweden in 1966/67. David followed her there and the two were married on January 13, 1967.

When they returned to the US, Doreen went to Purdue University for a couple of years, getting her M.A. After some consideration and considering the current (at the time) climate of the United States, the couple moved to British Columbia in 1969 after graduation. Their daughter Ingrid was born in March 1972 in White Rock, BC and they moved with her to Gray Creek in 1973. Two years later, their son Jakob was born in March 1975.

The family settled a four-acre plot of land up "Hippy Hill" in Gray Creek, surrounded

by only a small handful of other back-to-the-landers. They farmed, gardened, raised some livestock and made the best living they could as tree-planters in the middle of somewhere-special/not-yet-defined Kootenay Lake culture.

Doreen got her teaching certificate in 1986/87 at Simon Fraser University and began teaching English and Drama at Crawford Bay School right away. Her career as a teacher defined her, although she came later to it than many have. She was 42 years old when she became a teacher and brought with her a spark that translated to hundreds of young minds. Her strict expectations of her students sent ripples through the lives of all those she taught. The ones who may have fallen through the cracks were seen by her, held up and taught to push harder, try more. The ones who questioned themselves did so with her beside them, showing them their right and privilege through language and expression. She impacted so many lives and that effect continued outside of the classroom. She helped to form a local theatre group in 2010 and continued to bring that spark of inspiration and higher calling to adults in the community who sought to play and entertain. She walloped them into shape and had the same expectations as she did of any students, while forging some unbreakable and powerful friendships.

Her creativity was boundless. Just before she passed and much to her relief, she finished the first draft of her novel. She was a potter and most East Shore homes boast a piece or twenty of Doreen's. She was a kayaker, a gardener, a poet, a painter, a potter, a writer, a volunteer. She was a mother and a grandmother who loved fiercely and still with parameters (her independence was always maintained).

Both of her parents predecease her, but she is achingly and completely missed by a community that loved her, friends who will celebrate her forever and a family who will hold her up forever. Her children Ingrid (Juergen), Jakob (Jennifer) and grandchildren Halle, Robin, Mowat, Zoe and Luka are all pieces of this unforgettable woman and we honour that gift with all of our hearts.

In this absolutely unexpected time in the world, and with so many unknowns, we know Doreen is free. She will always be with us. We would like to thank so, so many people, but will be as brief as possible. Thank you to Dr. Mieske and nurse Lia for being there with so much grace and confidence at the end. Bottomless thanks to Dr. Malpass and the nurses and staff at Kootenay Lake Hospital (specifically those in the ER and the infusion/chemo lab, Dr. Piver and Dr. Barbour (and Kathy) at the East Shore Health Centre, the oncology team in Kelowna (Dr. Khoo and Atchian and staff), the Cancer Society and Rotary Lodges, Hope Air and all the good people who make this walk through cancer a little easier. Enormous thanks to the Home Support and Home Care team (all the workers and nurses with whom we created such wonderful relationships), East Shore Hospice, the wonderful Benni walkers, the friends and supports who helped lighten the load. There are too many to name, but we know that you know that we know that you are everything. Thank you.

Finally, as far as a celebration of life, we will hold off for a while. We hope to have a gathering in a month or two. Please watch for further information.

