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Deborah Stephenson Reed



Sept. 14, 1969 -Feb. 27, 2024

Her family is deeply saddened to share that Deborah Stephenson Reed of Orinda, CA passed away at home on February 27th, 2024, at the age of 54, due to complications of metastatic breast cancer.

▭ Deb was born to Robert K. and Nancy J. Stephenson in Marin County on September 14th, 1969. Deb grew up in Davis, California and graduated from St. Francis High School in Sacramento. She attended the University of Oregon and Simmons College, graduating early (no surprise to those who know her) with a B.A. in American Studies.

▭ Deb and her future husband Mitch Reed met the first day of ninth grade in Spanish class. Mitch was madly in love with her from the second he saw her bright eyes, her beautiful smile, and the incredible energy and humor that drew everyone to her. Deb took a few years to be convinced of Mitch's merits, but once they began dating, they were together for the next 40 years. Deb and Mitch married in June 1991, and they moved into a tiny apartment in Hoboken, NJ. Deb worked in adult special education in Manhattan, with a break in 1992

precipitated by the birth of the first of their wonderful daughters, Hannah Jane. The family moved in 1996 to Northern California, which was always where Deb's heart was. Another daughter, Elizabeth Virginia, joined the family in 1998. The family expanded again in July 2020 and December 2022 with the birth of perfect grandchildren Oliver Joseph and Lilly Wolf Olson, to Hannah and her husband Dr. Kyle Olson.

▭ While she is gone far too soon, Deb packed more into her 54 years than most people could in 100. All who knew her will remember her as a force of nature. She always put others before herself, and there was never a problem that a friend or family member had that Deb would not drop everything to solve. She worked tirelessly as a social worker, volunteer, and consultant, contributing her empathy, creativity and self-taught expertise in Salesforce and fundraising to organizations such as the court system of Hudson County, NJ, CASA, the Educational Foundation of Orinda, Humane Society of Silicon Valley, the National Center for Youth Law, and countless others. She pursued each of her interests with unbridled enthusiasm; she was a certified Master Composter and Gardener and an amateur landscape and interior designer. Her other passion was hiking with her dogs Buster, Boom Boom, and Nacho.

▭ In 2021, Deb took on a massive renovation to a neglected log cabin in Wisconsin which will forever be her family legacy. Even in the most challenging time of her life Deb endured countless hardships to travel repeatedly to LA to participate in a clinical trial - it was incredibly important to her that her sacrifices will likely change the lives of so many women facing this brutal disease.

▭ The years after her initial diagnosis in 2005 allowed Deb to raise her daughters, plan an amazing wedding for her daughter Hannah, see her daughter Ellie find a wonderful partner in life Riga, meet her grandpuppy Walnut and grandkitty Arthur, and fill her grandchildren's lives with Gomma's joy and craziness. She was a ringleader and entertainer for all, hosting epic holiday parties which included costume contests, talent shows, and even a live pinata (aka Mitch) who was chased and assaulted by a pack of cousins, nieces, and nephews. Even after her disease came back, Mitch & Deb traveled the world as they did throughout her life, visiting Australia, Amsterdam, and London in 2022. Her family is incredibly happy that they got that time, but the world will never be the same without her.

▭ Deb is survived by her parents Robert ("Kim") Stephenson and Nancy Stephenson, her husband Mitch Reed, daughters Hannah (Kyle Olson), and Ellie Reed (Riga Moettus), grandchildren Oliver and Lilly Olson, and siblings Bob Stephenson (Michiko Jameson), Jennifer Jones (Rich Jones), and John Stephenson (Nathalie Jans), and a large extended family. Her faithful doggie companion Nacho never left her side (including a sneak visit to the hospital - shhh!).

▭ Her family would like to recognize Elle Stephens, a family friend who guided Deb through every step of her cancer journey, and whom they believe is a hero to so many women. They'd also like to offer immense gratitude to Dr. Mark Moasser of UCSF, who was Deb's partner in fighting cancer for 20 years. Thank you to all the dear friends and family who supported Deb and her family through the challenges of her illness.

▭ While Deb loved flowers, she requested that those who wish to honor her make charitable contributions. Deb loved supporting children, conservation, and animals. She hated being told what to do, so she asked that people choose a cause that is dear to them.

▭ A memorial service will be held at a later date.

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