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*PAULA VOLLMER SMITH (1956-2024)*  
*LdM Class of 1974*

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*December 9, 2024*

Paula Jean Smith (Vollmer), loving wife, mother, and grandmother passed away peacefully the afternoon of December 9, 2024. She is survived by her husband, Brian, sons, Brendan and Brian (Jacqui), sister, Vicki (Jim), and granddaughter, Penelope.

Paula was born in Chicago, Illinois on December 5, 1956. For those reading carefully, she passed away four days after her 68th birthday. She left while birthday balloons still adorned the house. Anyone who met Paula knows this was fitting. Paula brought a spark of adventure and joy to every room. She was a staunch believer that there was simply no use being sad when balloons and silly hats existed.

Paula's parents were Ralph and Ginny Vollmer. She enjoyed two peaceful years before her younger sister and best influence, Vicki Lynn, was born in 1958. The family spent their summers on Lake Delavan, Wisconsin in the family cottage "Bonnie Dunne" built by Paula's great grandparents. Paula returned to the lake with her extended family just last summer.

Paula and Vicki attended Marillac High School, where Paula got her first taste of government work as Senior Class President. The two were introduced to Colorado on school ski trips during which they would fill up the back of the bus with Coors Light for the "dads and nuns." Paula attended Purdue University where she met the "Boiler Babes"—voracious texters and basketball enthusiasts who became lifelong friends.

Paula moved to Colorado in 1981. She was hired by a government contractor and, upon receiving her first business cards, wasted no time distributing them to anyone she met at Golden's Oktoberfest. One of those lucky recipients was Brian Smith. Paula and Brian both agreed to a double date for friends. It turned out that the friends weren't meant to be, but Brian and Paula were. They attended Halloween that year with equally impressive homemade costumes and the rest, as they say, is history.

Paula and Brian married in Denver in 1985. They honeymooned in London and Oslo—the first of many travel adventures together. The couple were best friends and a fitting complement to one another. Where he was methodical, she was spontaneous. And yet, somehow, their differences never felt like obstacles. They celebrated their 39th wedding anniversary this year.

They moved to their home on Lookout Mountain in 1987. It was Paula's lot in life to be surrounded by handsome men. Their first son Brian was born in 1988 and Brendan followed in 1990. Ever the free spirit, Paula would commune with nature and breastfeed on the hill behind their home. Paula hasn't missed a Boulder Boulder since she started running in 1995.

Paula began working for the Environmental Protection Agency the same year Brian was born. She was a lifelong champion of the environment and worked on everything from Rocky Flats to the Gold King Mine disaster. She retired in 2016, and Brian joined her shortly thereafter.

Brian and Paula travelled extensively both domestically and abroad. They purchased a campervan "Mo Bungalo" and went ballooning in Albuquerque, hiking in Yellowstone, fishing in Montana, camping in Iowa, and saw the most recent eclipses in Nebraska and Texas. They visited London, Paris, Italy, Normandy, Germany, Austria, Hong Kong, China, and Belize. Paula and Vicki also had some wild adventures in "Mo Bungalo" and took a trip to Lourdes, France.

Paula and Brian collected a multitude of friends over the years. Between Ski trips, supper clubs, book clubs, and family dinners, Paula rarely had an empty day on her calendar. She was always ready for the next opportunity to get everyone "in a pile" on family trips to Hawaii and Winter Park and Grand Lake.

Paula took on her most recent role as "Nana" to granddaughter, Penelope, earlier this year. The two loved napping together in the recliner and playing peekaboo with Grandpa.

Paula was diagnosed with brain cancer in December 2022. She underwent emergency surgery and was laughing and joking with the doctors and her family less than 24 hours later. Like everything else she did, Paula met this challenge with positivity and humor.

Paula was larger than life and an unstoppable force of love. She approached every situation with a sense of fun and treated every day as an adventure. She made a difference in the lives of so many. We will remember her smile, her warmth, her energy, and her love for life, family and friends.

We invite you to join us and celebrate Paula's life Wednesday December 18, 2024 at 10 am at Mother Cabrini Shrine 20189 Cabrini Blvd, Golden CO 80401.

In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Safe Harbor Lab Rescue.