

Mel Gitchel

June 1, 1949 – January 30, 2021



WELLS RIVER, VT — Mel Gitchel, 71, died at home on Jan. 30, 2021 in the arms of Ben, her beloved husband of 48 years.

She was born Mary Linda Stelzer on June 1, 1949 in Southold, Long Island, NY. That name will come as a surprise to many of her friends who always and only knew her as Mel. The shift in her name came about in 1968 when officials in a short story contest mistook her "ML" initials as an indication that she was male. She subsequently adopted the name.

Throughout her life, Mel had eclectic interests and was accomplished in a variety of creative fields. In 1968 she received the Second Place Award for Creative Writing from the National Society of Arts & Letters El Paso, Texas Chapter. Her poetry was published in distinguished poetry journals. For some years, she wrote a

column for the Valley News, the Journal Opinion, and for a national magazine about alternative health. Mel was also an award-winning photographer. She won First Place for an entry to Black and White Photography Magazine. Her photos were featured in both group and individual exhibits through Ava Gallery, and at Alumni Hall shows.

Her most significant local project was the production of Portraits of Piermont, a book in celebration of that town's 250th celebration in 2014. Mel designed interview questions, met with those who chose to participate, took photos of them, wrote the copy, and put the book together.

Mel had a keen interest in education. She served as an Educational Assistant in charge of the Science Resource Center at Hanover High School from 1989 to 1996. This background gave her the experience and empathy to provide valuable support to her teacher friends for years to come.

She established Dancing Moon Herbals, producing herbal remedies. She created a dental formula for tooth and gum health. Mel shared the formula, and it continues to be sold at Chapman's Store in Fairlee, Vermont.

After training with a renowned Chinese healer in Boston, Mel became a Tui Na therapist, helping those with a variety of health conditions.

She loved bringing friends together, celebrating with potluck dinners where her own dishes were generally the most sought after. The evenings would include walks through her prolific and beautiful flower gardens and would often end with companionable gatherings around a fire.

Mel is survived by many friends who will miss her dearly, by her husband Ben Gitchel III, her son Ben Gitchel IV of New Orleans, and her sister Jacqueline Baker of Southold.

Memorials in her name can be made through donations to an animal rescue center of your choice.

Mel will be buried in the spring at South Lawn Cemetery, Piermont, NH. There will be a graveside service.

Ricker Funeral Home and Cremation Care of Woodsville is in charge of arrangements. This obituary can be viewed at www.rickerfh.com, where you can sign the online Guestbook to offer your remembrances and condolences.

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