

W. Lance Stoker



Dr. W. Lance Stoker, classic gentlemen, man in search of the perfect cup of coffee, foodie, closet dork, sweetheart, word junkie, and named best dressed in his high school class, died peacefully at home on Monday, November 18th.

Lance didn't understand cell phones or computers, and was challenged mechanically, but had a brilliant mind for medicine, vocabulary, and music. He hated out of tune pianos, cheap beer, new age music, Folgers, and dry scrambled eggs. His ability to sit down at a piano and play by ear was envied by many. If you could hum it, he could play it. Those who knew him will forever miss his warmth, generosity, dry humor and passion for music.

In 1976, uptight, Datsun 240Z-driving eastern gentlemen met a free spirited, VW bus-driving, western hippie in Flagstaff, Arizona. In 1979, the transplant (now a fully bearded, Birkenstock wearing, laid back, desert dweller) married the 60's-nonconforming, eccentric, feminist in the red rock-worshipping town of Sedona, Arizona. He had a love affair with the desert, mountains, sunsets, autumn foliage, and wildflowers, Subarus, coffee, stinky cheeses, lagers, jazz and classical music, weather watching, skiing and hiking, and carcinogenic crusted steaks forgotten on the grill. He was obsessed with finding the perfect cup of coffee. It had to be slow roasted and a perfect blend that appealed to his palate. He was known for placing his cup of coffee on the top of the car and driving away on his way to work. Sometimes he would arrive at his destination with the mug and coffee still intact. While appreciating the things he loved, he repeatedly said, "Wow, I have never seen anything like it!" as if he was experiencing it for the first time. A weather junkie, he made sure to catch the TV update at 10:13 PM nightly and his car radio was preset to the national weather service.

Lance's two passions were family and work. He loved medicine and never felt like he worked a day in his life. He was a wonderful listener and adored by his patients. His personal experience with depression drew him to pursue psychiatry. While he was a general practitioner in Lake Havasu, Arizona, Lance developed an interest in how the mind affected the body. In 1985, he moved his family to Salt Lake City to attend the University of Utah psychiatric residency.

Youthful looks were apparent. Lance took pride in looking 10 years younger and loved when women commented on his full head of hair. His Ellsworth Memorial H.S., Dartmouth College, and Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine graduation photos are interchangeable.

He liked intelligent and thoughtful women and enjoyed working alongside them. Ahead of his time in supporting equality for women, he encouraged his twin daughters to fulfill their educational dreams.

On Monday, November, 18th, at the age of 74, Lance died peacefully at home after a long decline mentally and physically. Bipolar depression was his kryptonite. Diagnosed with bipolar disorder at the age of 37, he was stable and productive for 25+ years. For his final nine years, he suffered from cancer, dementia, and debilitating depression that plagued him and his family. He was grateful to all who hung in there with him, especially his internist Barry Stults, M.D.; his psychiatrist Michael Lowry, M.D.; his wife Bertie; and his children Ryan, Sydney and Amelia. His family wishes to thank friends, neighbors, and health providers along the way who cared deeply about him.

A wake to celebrate his life will be held on Monday, November 25th from 6-8 PM at Stark Funeral Parlor, 900 East 3651 South. Remember Lance while appreciating a "I've never seen anything like it" sunset.

Online condolences may be offered to the family at www.starksfuneral.com

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