

RUTH LETITIA GAFFNEY, 1940-2017



Letitia "Tish" Gaffney peacefully passed away on the evening of 10 December 2017 in her home in Redlands, CA. Tish had bravely lived with ALS for past several years and she passed following a wonderful and happy weekend surrounded by her family. Born in Gainesville, FL on February 19, 1940, Tish was the daughter

of Rollin S. Atwood and Ruth Cox Atwood, and younger sister to Patricia (Pat), 8 years her senior. The family moved to Ecuador when Tish was an infant for her father's job with the U.S. State Department, and there she learned to speak Spanish before English. Being a fluent Spanish speaker stayed with her all her life.

Returning to the U.S.A., she grew up in Bethesda, and later Potomac, MD, where she spent her afternoons horseback riding and fox hunting with her band of friends, "The Four Musketeers", and many more. She prepared at Holton-Arms School in Bethesda, MD, and graduated in 1962 from Goucher College in Towson, MD, with a liberal arts degree and a love of art history. It was her nature to make loads of friends all along the way.

After college she lived in Madrid, Spain for 6 years working with Merrill Lynch. Returning home to Maryland, she worked with the Population Reference Bureau in the Brookings Institution building on Massachusetts Avenue where she met her husband, Merrill Mason Gaffney, a Professor of Economics, riding the elevator. It took many months before he introduced himself, and another to ask her for coffee. They married in September of 1973 and she immediately gained 3 stepchildren and changed her country of residence.

A drive cross country brought her to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, where she and Mason lived for 2.5 years and where their first 2 children were born, Laura and Patty. They moved to Riverside, CA in September of 1976 where their son Matthew was born. Whole family gatherings were commonplace. She united a family, melding all.

They lived in a ranch house dubbed "Las Brisas" on a hilltop surrounded by avocado and orange groves for the nearly 40 years. Friends and family were frequent guests and Tish loved to host events and was a master chef. Tish was involved with all aspects of her children's schooling and countless activities. Family vacations were to national parks and historical sites all over the country. She was a teacher, first of Spanish and then of 5th and 6th grade, at Garden Elementary School. She was adored by her students, and she loved them and teaching. She had a life-long love of nature – hummingbirds, pets of all kinds, flowers, especially roses. (continued on page 9)

In retirement, she and her husband moved to the Plymouth Village community in Redlands, CA in 2015. She made great friends and enjoyed the company of residents and staff alike. Tish did not suffer. To the last she remained the happy, content, cheerful, and puckish girl she had always been, buoyed by the constant care, love and companionship and family, friends and caregivers.

After retirement, she volunteered at the Mary S. Roberts Pet Adoption Center walking dogs and entertaining the cats.

Tish is survived by her husband of 44 years, Mason; her daughters Laura A. Gaffney and Patricia M. Gaffney and her son Matthew R. Gaffney; her sister Pat Millard and her husband Bill; her stepchildren Bradford C. Gaffney, Ann Gaffney Shores, her husband Tom Shores and their daughter Meredith Shores, and Stuart Gaffney and his husband John Lewis.

A Celebration of Life Service was held on Saturday, February 3 at the Mission Inn in Riverside CA.

Memorial contributions may be made to ALS Association Golden West Chapter (http://webgw.alsa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=GW_homepage)

or The Mary S. Roberts Pet Adoption Center (<https://petsadoption.com/index.php/giving/donations/general>)

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