



## Paula Maria Benedict

March 31, 1952 - January 29, 2025

Paula Maria (Leone) Benedict, cherished wife, mother, sister, and friend, peacefully passed on January 29, 2025 with her family by her side at her home in Avila Beach.

Paula is survived by her loving husband of 48+ years, Stephen Benedict, their beloved daughter, Stephanie (Benedict) Brantley and son-in-law Kalen Brantley, brother Leslie Leone and sister-in-law Mary Leone, nieces Anne Leone Anderson (Philip Anderson) and Rachel Mangiavellano (Bryan Mangiavellano), their children Nathan Mangiavellano and Isaac Mangiavellano, and many adoring friends.

Paula was born in March 1952 in Royal Oak, Michigan, to Leonard Leone and Bertha Adela Leone. Leonard was the theatre director of Wayne State University and a local business owner in Berkley. Bertha was a visual artist, one of the early animators for The Walt Disney Co. and an independent artist with many works displayed in the Detroit area. Growing up, Paula loved to play with her brother, their dog Taffy, and her many friends, and also to spend time backstage at her father's theatre productions. While at Berkley High School (class of 1970), Paula wrote for The Royal Oak Daily Tribune and traveled to Denmark on an exchange program.

Paula graduated from Michigan State University with her B.A. in

Speech/Language Pathology in 1974, and her M.A. in the same in 1975. She met Steve while they both worked in the university's planetarium. For their first date, Steve took Paula on a motorcycle ride to the observatory for a private viewing of the stars. They married at the chapel at Michigan State in November 1976.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Steve and Paula traveled North America with their successful laser light show company, Eye See The Light. They performed at theatres, planetariums, and concerts, including with musical artists The Grateful Dead, Journey, Linda Ronstadt, Rush, and Dr. John.

In 1980, Paula and Steve settled in the San Francisco Bay Area, first in San Francisco and then in Oakland. From 1980 - 1984 they directed the planetarium laser shows at the California Academy of Sciences. During this time, Paula earned a (second) M.A., in Educational Administration, from San Francisco State University.

Their daughter Stephanie was born in San Francisco in 1990, and they moved to Los Altos in 1994. Paula worked as a Speech/Language Therapist in the Richmond, Sunnyvale and Cupertino School Districts, as well as a private school, and later as Professor of Communicative Disorders & Sciences at San Jose State University. They moved to Avila Beach in 2009 part-time, and full-time in 2015, becoming active members of the community.

Paula and Steve continued their love of music and stage performance throughout their lives, frequenting jazz festivals, concerts, theatres and music cruises. They enjoyed traveling around the world, hiking with friends, eating delicious meals at restaurants, appreciating good wine, and cheering for the San Francisco Giants. Paula's favorite place was Maui. Everywhere she went, Paula attracted friendship and admiration for her gentle warmth, strength, no-

nonsense humor, and inclusivity.

Paula's greatest joy was her daughter, Stephanie. She was endlessly proud of Stephanie's many accomplishments, and always encouraged her daughter to pursue her interests and opportunities for growth. Paula and Steve especially enjoyed visiting their daughter in Washington, D.C., where Stephanie went to college and lived for many years. Paula and Steve enjoyed multiple private tours of the West Wing of the White House, and attended a presidential inaugural ball.

On January 20, Paula witnessed Stephanie marry at the Benedict family home in Avila Beach, bringing Paula great joy and peace.

Paula fought a 5+ year battle with metastatic endometrial cancer. She encouraged everyone she knew to advocate for their own health, to always get their regular check-ups and screenings, and to not ignore any symptoms or anything that might feel 'off'. Paula was grateful to her doctors and nurses for their care.

In lieu of flowers, the family encourages donations in Paula's memory to the Cancer Vaccine Coalition and the Foundation for Women's Cancer.

Memorial service will be held on Saturday February 22, 2025 at Reis Family Mortuary (991 Nipomo St.) in San Luis Obispo at 11:00am, with reception to follow.

We love you forever, Paula.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

FEB **22**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (PT)

Reis Family Mortuary and Crematory

991 Nipomo Street

San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

(805) 544-7400

[k.reis1958@gmail.com](mailto:k.reis1958@gmail.com)

<https://www.reisfamilymortuary.net/>

# Tribute Wall

SB

“ Steve B. purchased the Lily and Rose Tribute Spray for the family of Paula Maria Benedict.



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**Steve B.** - February 19, 2025 at 11:44 AM

SB

“ Steve B. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Paula Maria Benedict.

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**Steve B.** - February 19, 2025 at 11:44 AM