

Obituaries

Marilyn R. Saunders

Amateur jazz and rescued cats, global citizenship and world peace, healing imagery and human consciousness all mixed together to inform the complex life of Marilyn R. Saunders, PhD.

As a world citizen, Marilyn traveled extensively. In the late 1960s she was a Peace Corps volunteer in Somalia, on the Horn of Africa, and later she taught at the University of Guyana in South America.

She belonged to several world peace organizations, including Global Citizen Journey, which strives to bridge cultural differences at the grassroots level, arranging for delegates from the U.S. to share, work and learn with neighbors around the world. For eight years, Marilyn directed a summer camp for inner city children at Day Spring Retreat Center in Maryland. In 2005, she traveled to Bosnia for training with Conflict Transformation Across Cultures.

Professionally, Marilyn worked for 25 years in private practice in Germantown, Md. as a licensed clinical professional counselor, a nationally certified counselor, and an advanced clinician in Imago Relationship Therapy. She completed a certificate in Psychosocial Foundations of Peace building from the School for International Training, and was active in the Institute of Noetic Sciences and the World Future Society. She coauthored the book, "Using Imagery in Therapy: A Path to Nurture, Empowerment, and Reconciliation," and made numerous presentations at national and international conferences and meetings.

Marilyn was born on Nov. 6, 1939, in Bloomfield, N.J., to Henry and Mary Saunders.

She graduated with a bachelor of science degree in psychology from Denison College, and a master of arts degree in political science from the University of Wisconsin, then entered the Peace Corps and taught grade school English in Somalia for three years.

When she returned to the U.S. she completed her doctorate's degree in teacher education from Syracuse University, then lived and taught in Guyana for several years before settling down to her psychotherapy practice in Maryland.

She retired to Whidbey Island in 2004. Since then, she had been active in many organizations including the Unitarian Universalist Church, the Lorian Association, and the Wednesday morning marimba group. She was appointed to the Langley Library Board in July 2008.



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In her final days, when she realized that she was at the end of her life, Marilyn let go to her dying process with attention and deep peace. Ahmed Amin, the son of her heart whom she had taught in Somalia and brought to the U.S. when he was a boy, traveled from Virginia to faithfully attend Marilyn's dying. She died in the evening of March 24.

Marilyn will be missed by friends around the world, friends on Whidbey Island, and all of her family members in Virginia and Maryland: Ahmed Amin (Ganna Shirwa) and their son, Abshir Amin, of whom Marilyn was the proud grandmother; her brother, Reed (Dolly) Saunders, and their children, Ray Saunders, Craig Saunders, John Saunders, and Rachael Saunders-Pullman. Marilyn hoped that friends would remember her as caring and fun.

Donations in honor of Marilyn's life may be offered to Enso House (6339 Wahl Road, Freeland, WA 98249), to the Unitarian Universalist Church in Freeland or to a cause close to your own heart. Arrangements were entrusted to Barley Funeral Chapel, Oak Harbor.