



Michelle Lee Lanz

April 26, 1957 - March 24, 2017

Michelle Lee (Gigstad) Lanz, 59, began her journey in this world April 26, 1957, born the eldest of the late Phyllis (Miech) and Benjamin Gigstad in Billings, MT. From there, her sense of adventure and innate curiosity led her to numerous outposts across North America and overseas, where she lived, studied, educated others, raised a family, volunteered, created art, and enjoyed nature. She died March 24, 2017 in Bellingham, WA, where she was a doctoral student pursuing a degree in educational leadership.

For Michelle, education served as both her passion and purpose. Not only was she always top in her class, she had an instinct for helping others excel in their education, too. After graduating high school in Alvin, TX, she earned a bachelor's degree in math and chemistry at the University of Texas at Austin, then a master's degree in psychology at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin in Odessa, where she met her soulmate, Robert "Bob" Lanz, Jr.

She married Bob in 1985 in Denver, where they started their family and found a new way for Michelle to engage in education. After moving to Alaska, she homeschooled her two sons from kindergarten through 12th grade and worked with other parents to organize homeschooling co-ops before moving to Houston, TX in 2004. After her sons finished high school, Michelle continued her work in education through the Lone Star College in Tomball, TX,

where she helped underserved students find success in college. These experiences eventually led Michelle to pursue a doctoral degree at the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education, where she planned to hone her methods and approach to helping students bridge the achievement gap and pursue a college education.

Michelle's interests didn't end with education. Always an explorer, she filled her free time with many interests—music, reading, art, travel, nature, her many pets, and most of all, her family.

Michelle enjoyed cowboy boots and George Strait records as much as she loved playing French horn and listening to classical music, with Bach and Mozart ranking at the top of her list of favorites.

Never a big fan of television or movies, she preferred spending time socializing with friends and family, especially her grandchildren. She enjoyed reading scripture, novels by Norah Roberts and John Steinbeck, and anything she could get her hands on about health, science, and math. An accomplished artist, Michelle created stained-glass art and even learned to paint in recent years. Her family fondly remembers her love of holidays, especially Christmas and Easter, when she'd go “over the top” decorating the house and preparing food, games, and gifts for everyone to enjoy.

Michelle not only lived in many places in her lifetime, she also traveled extensively. When her oldest son raced mountain bikes and road bikes competitively, she attended all his races to cheer him on, which took her to destinations in California, Arizona, South Carolina, and New Jersey.

No matter where she lived or visited, she loved nature. On nice days, you might find her hiking the outdoors, enjoying the sunshine and fresh air, or showering animals with love and affection. Her list of pets over time included

ducks, pigs, dogs, cats, horses, and an African grey parrot.

Her love of sunshine suited her well, given her radiant smile, contagious laugh, and sunny disposition. Many remember Michelle for her generosity and optimism. She volunteered at Lighthouse Mission Ministries, where she helped homeless people find refuge and get back on their feet. Her advice then, as always, was: “remember that tomorrow is a new day and you can always push on from where you are to get to where you want to be.”

She is survived by her two sons, Benjamin (Shannon) Lanz of Round Rock, TX, and Bradley Lanz of Bellingham WA, and three grandchildren, Stella, Troy, and Maddox. She is also survived by two sisters, Joanne Gistad and Karen Keller, both of Texas; her soulmate, Robert Lanz, Jr. of Houston, TX, to whom she was married for 30 years; and six nephews, twelve nieces, five great-nephews and one great-niece. Family and friends will celebrate her life and honor her memory privately. Her cremated remains will be interred at a later date. Instead of flowers, the family requests donations be made to Lighthouse Mission Ministries, PO Box 548, Bellingham, WA 98227-0548.

Tribute Wall

PS

“ *This beautiful tribute to Michelle captures her wonderfully. My deepest sympathy to her family and friends who now have a huge void to fill in their lives. The only “good” part about losing Michelle at such a young age is knowing that she is in the presence of God for eternity because of her decision to accept His sacrifice of His one and only Son for the forgiveness of her sins. I will see her again! Praise the Lord!*

Patty Shepley - March 24, 2017 at 12:00 AM

TF

“ *Ben, Shannon and Family,
We are so sorry to hear about your loss. Losing a parent is something that no one is ever prepared for. If you and your family need anything please let us know. In times of sorrow this has always been my words of comfort:
Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.
With warm condolences
The Decker family*

The Decker Family - March 24, 2017 at 12:00 AM

NT

“Michelle was a lovely person who was kind and thoughtful. I'm glad to have gotten to know her. She will be missed.

Nina Thomas - March 24, 2017 at 12:00 AM

SM

“Bob, I am so sorry for the loss of your soulmate. I hope she is at peace. Love you. Stacy

Stacy Miller - March 24, 2017 at 12:00 AM