

Mary Budke Swanson
March 30, 1948 - February 3, 2019
Denver, Colorado



Mary Budke Swanson was no ordinary person. One of two daughters, Mary and her sister Nancy were born to a hard-working St. Louis doctor, Robert Budke, and a nurse, Marian; an adventurous “flying Nurse” or “air hostess” in the late 1930s. Mary and Nancy lost their father when they were very young and Mary quickly learned from their mother the value of humor and laughter that would mold and guide her life. Mary’s incredible gift of humor flowed naturally from her and she was always ready with a quip or adroit comment that made your day. It was simply who she was, one of a kind.

Driven by a desire to learn, travel and experience the world, Mary worked for over 30 years in the evolving airline industry, first for Frontier Airlines in Denver, Colorado and then for United Airlines in Chicago, Illinois. A gifted public relations professional Mary immersed herself in the communications field and shaped many of the messages that carried these airlines through both the good and tumultuous times.

In the early 1980s Mary found Bob Swanson, the love of her life and soul mate. He recognized her unique beauty, remarkable personality and adventurous spirit and knew he had found his life partner. Having met in a hot tub in a health and fitness club it was foreshadowed that they would enjoy a mutual love of water. They were married nearly thirty-five years and sailed, wind surfed, went scuba diving in the tropics and traveled extensively, all burnished with Mary’s gift of humor. Mary loved her life with Bob and with great joy embraced his son Todd and then Heather upon their marriage. And then there were the two grandsons, Jack and Beckett, widening the circle of love she and Bob shared. It was this young family that brought Mary and Bob back to Colorado after her retirement from United Airlines in 2007.

Always searching for adventure, Mary began horseback riding in recent years and one of her proudest accomplishments was learning to ride English side saddle. She moved up through the levels to master small jumps and was absolutely gleeful in relating her successes. It is questionable who had more fun Mary or the horse.

Along with her husband Bob Swanson, sister Nancy Judge, step-son Todd and wife Heather and grandsons Jack and Beckett, Mary leaves friends all over the country that will miss her quick wit, her ability to bring out giggles and guffaws and in particular, her kindness and love. Her unexpected death was a shock and one that will remain. But she would only want us all to remember...the giggles, the laughter, the kindness, compassion, light and joy that was Mary Swanson. She would want to leave you laughing. Her laugh. It welled up from deep inside and rocked with complete joy. It is simply who she was, one of a kind.