



## Jane Ellen Else Smith

January 24, 1945 - May 1, 2021

Jane Ellen Else Smith passed away peacefully at home just before sunrise on May 1, 2021 surrounded by her loving family after a brief battle with colon cancer that was discovered only weeks prior.

Jane is survived by her daughter, Jessica, son-in-law Amitabh Handa and grandchildren Bodhi and Lily as well as John Hendrickson, her life partner of 23 years, his children Todd (Kimm), Lori (Corey), and Tim and grandchildren, Adam, Justin, Kacie, Jacob, Simone and Ezra as well as a whole host of friends and neighbors who became like family over the years.

Jane was born on January 24, 1945 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She was raised primarily by her divorced mother Medora and grandmother Ellen, whom she loved dearly. In 1959, her mother married Merle W. Else and they moved to Hopkins, Minnesota. Merle adopted Jane as his daughter and she cherished her new family and neighborhood, built lifelong friendships and graduated with honors from Hopkins High School in 1963.

Jane, who always exuded a natural curiosity and a passion for learning, attended Macalester College where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Spanish. The highlight of Jane's college career was her year spent abroad in Madrid, Spain through New York University. Always up for adventure, she sailed on the Queen Mary by herself, toured Europe and then attended the University of Madrid. There she perfected her Castilian Spanish and picked up a lifelong love of travel and a desire to explore and understand other cultures, people and places which became a central theme in her life and work.

After graduating from Macalester in 1967, Jane married her college boyfriend and taught Spanish and English as a second language. She then moved to Dallas, Texas where she worked at Highland Park United Methodist Church and attended the University of North Texas, and received a Masters degree in Education and Spanish. Jane went on to teach high school English and Spanish until she had her daughter, Jessica, in 1975.

Back in Minnesota, Jane focused on raising her daughter. She taught her everything about gardening, cooking, creativity and how to be kind to animals and people. She sang numerous silly songs, invented words, grew her own vegetables, tended grape vines and made her own jam. She bred and raised Irish Setters as show dogs, allowed her daughter to bring home a stray dog, collected barn cats, a house cat, crayfish and birds. She cooked countless delicious family meals and always, always welcomed friends and neighbors in to share. She taught English as a second language to Vietnamese immigrants, volunteered at the School for the Blind and with her church, helped start the Steeple People Surplus store in 1979. She made sure her daughter knew she was loved always, no matter what, and that girls can do anything they put their minds to.

In the mid 1980's Jane and her family relocated to Buckinghamshire, England. She was thrilled about the possibility of another adventure as she had such a wonderful experience living abroad in college. Highlights included extensive travel across Europe exploring historic places, countless castles and cathedrals, climbing numerous towers, touring art museums, skiing in the Alps, driving across Italy and sunning in southern France, Portugal and Spain. She also got to do her much beloved cross cultural consulting work through Wilson Learning, earn her pilot's license at Wycombe Airforce Base and attend postgraduate studies in theology at Oxford University.

Along with the highs, these years also brought great challenges and upon returning to the U.S. Jane divorced her husband of 22 years and started a new chapter. She put herself through law school at William Mitchell College of Law, set up a house for her and her daughter on Summit Avenue in St. Paul and built an extended family of friends who have celebrated birthdays and holidays together ever since. She held volunteer leadership roles in numerous organizations including the Women's Club of Minneapolis, Women's Association Minnesota Orchestra and Macalester College Alumni Association.

After graduating from law school Jane worked at West Publishing Group where she was able to tie together her fluency in Spanish with her passion for law and cross cultural work by leading the teams that helped publish the law for Puerto Rico and Mexico. This experience spurred Jane to launch her own consulting business, LiSimba Consulting Services, focused on navigating cross-cultural issues in business. She presented at numerous workshops and trainings globally, qualified to appear before the supreme court, attended the Milosevic hearings in The Hague and quite literally wrote the chapter on "Best Practices in Managing Cross Cultural Concerns" for the ABA Section of International Law. Most meaningful to her was the work she got to do later in her career when she worked 1:1 with executives relocating from other cultures to the US.

In 1998, after over a decade of going solo, Jane reconnected with an old friend from Hopkins High School, John Hendrickson. Together they began another beautiful chapter filled with love, so much joy and of course adventure. During their 23 years together they moved into their dream home on Lake Minnetonka and travelled the world. Their numerous trips included India, China, Dubai, Australia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, England, Italy, France, Spain, all over the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Mexico, Thailand, Greece, and cruises in Alaska, Russia, and South America.

Favorite memories include riding camels and elephants in India and Africa, swimming with the dolphins in Mexico, petting a lion in Africa and a tiger in Russia, taking a balloon safari in Kenya and attending a wedding in Zimbabwe on an island in the Zambezi River.

They also shared countless boat rides on Lake Minnetonka, dinners at Fletchers and Al & Almas, ice cream at Adele's, sunsets on their dock, fishing for sunnies with the grandkids and swimming nightly off the dock. They loved cocktails before dinner, fireworks on the 4th of July, couples golf at Windsong, couples costumes at Halloween in Las Vegas, a giant Christmas tree, snuggles and TV on the couch. There was always laughter, always joy and always a good story to be shared.

Jane absolutely loved being a grandma to her own grandkids and John's too. She adored attending soccer and baseball games, dance recitals and birthday parties, baking special cakes and favorite meals, picking out gifts and making sure everyone knew they were special and loved just the way they are.

Jane greeted each day with a joyful heart, each person with unconditional love and acceptance and met each challenge gracefully and with determination. Her positivity had an enduring influence on hundreds of individuals. She saw the good in all things and she celebrated the simple joys of daily life. She believed deeply in spirit and we know hers will live on in the hearts of those whose lives she touched and will be honored in the beauty of small things - a drop of dew in the morning, a fresh rose blossom, a new bud on a tree or in the way the sun glints off the water on Lake Minnetonka.

Jane is predeceased by her mother Medora Else, father Merle W. Else, her aunts, Marian, Marjorie and her brothers Merle and Vincent Else.

The family is planning an invitation-only celebration of her life at her favorite place on the lake at the end of June. For extended family and friends, a live streaming event will be created so all can join - please email [jellens21+jane@gmail.com](mailto:jellens21+jane@gmail.com) for this information.

To further Jane's mission of bringing together cultures Jane's family is creating a scholarship fund in her name with the goal of providing financial assistance to college students who want to study abroad - for the first step to understanding other cultures is to experience them.