



Jolene Louise Roehlkepartain

February 6, 1962 - November 2, 2022

Jolene L. (Roehlke) Roehlkepartain

Jolene L. Roehlkepartain (age 60), died in her St. Louis Park home on November 2, 2022, after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in February on the day before her 60th birthday.

With her husband, Gene, and her two sons, Micah and Eli, Jolene chose to relish the last months of her life in the beauty of state parks, waterfalls, flowers, birds, and woodlands. She also made it a priority to be present and open with her friends, family, and colleagues as she navigated the difficult journey through chemo, then hospice, with intentionality, honesty, and a deep belief in the ultimate goodness and grace of Life and Love.

Jolene grew up in Fridley, MN, where she was active in yearbook, band, and other activities in high school. Upon graduation, she then went to St. Olaf College to complete a self-designed major in communications. While in college, she landed a magazine editing internship in New York City. It happened that Gene Partain from Texas was also accepted into the same program that year. They "clicked" (both being photographers), dated long distance through their senior year, and then looked for jobs where they could be near each other.

The first of those jobs was in Chicago. They married in 1985, combining their last names to create "Roehlkepartain." Then they moved to positions in Loveland, CO, and circled back to the Twin Cities in 1991, where they settled in St. Louis Park.

Through her career, Jolene wrote 33 books and hundreds of magazine articles, focusing in areas of family life, parenting, spirituality, youth development, and informal education. She also worked with several organizations and companies, completing her career as the Senior Department Manager of Program Services at ACET Inc., which provides culturally tailored evaluation and related solutions to organizations that serve historically marginalized communities.

As an independent writer, she invested in writing creative nonfiction, young adult fiction, memoirs, and children's books. Despite her success in publishing nonfiction, she struggled to place her fiction with an agent or publisher. Yet she remained tenacious in writing, rewriting, and pitching books to the very end.

Another important creative outlet for Jolene was music, particularly playing flute, which she did for each church she joined throughout her life. In addition to flute, she was accomplished on the piano and played the tenor sax in high school. Later in life, she also learned to play the trombone-just because she wanted to.

Though her accomplishments were many, those who knew Jolene first think of who she was, not what she did. She was a bright light that drew people to her. They recall her genuine empathy, contagious laughter, insatiable curiosity, and focused attention on each person she met-their story, their interests, and what they were going through. (Somehow she always remembered their situation the next time she saw them.) The title of a widely distributed brochure she created for Search Institute captured how she connected with everyone (not just kids): *150 Ways to Show Kids You Care*.

Jolene loved family history (particularly the stories about people) and could tell you much more about who preceded her in death and who survives her than can be reported here. She is preceded in death by her dad, Walter Roehlke; father-in-law, Jack Partain; 5 grandparents (due to a remarriage); 24 aunts and uncles; 9 cousins; a number of dear friends; and four wonderful cats. She is survived by Gene Roehlkepartain, her husband for 37 years; sons Micah

and Eli; her cat, Kala; 3 grandcats; her mother, Dorothy (Miller) Roehlke; sister Nancy (Matt) Simoneau; mother-in-law, Ruth Partain; brothers-in-law Will (Grace) Partain and David (Anneli) Partain; one niece, three nephews, an aunt and uncle, many cousins, and a host of amazing friends close to home and around the world. If she were still here, she could tell you something interesting about every one of them.

After receiving her cancer diagnosis, Jolene started writing about her journey on CaringBridge.org. By the time of her death, people had visited the site about 28,000 times, many commenting on her reflections on her journey with cancer. One visitor wrote, "My heart continues to be so blessed by your ongoing wisdom sharp and poignant, laced with kindness and gentleness to yourself and to your readers. It's hard to believe that even in the suffering (perhaps especially so), your wisdom continues to bubble up. It speaks so clearly to who you are as a person . . . who has lived her life awake."

VISITATION: 4 to 7 pm, Friday, November 18, Washburn-McReavy Edina Chapel, 5000 W 50th & MN-100, Edina, MN

MEMORIAL SERVICE: 11 am, Saturday, November 19, at Mayflower Church, 106 E Diamond Lake Rd., Minneapolis, MN. All guests are expected to be up to date on Covid vaccines and to wear high-quality masks. Service will also be broadcast online. To access the online broadcast, visit here [LINK TO COME] A LUNCHEON will follow the Memorial Service at the church. All guests are welcome.

GRAVESIDE SERVICE: 2 pm, Saturday, November 19, Washburn-McReavy Hillside Cemetery, 2600 19th Ave NE., Minneapolis, MN

IN LIEU OF FLOWERS, please consider contributing to one of many philanthropic causes that were important to Jolene. These include:

- Mayflower Church: A Christian community in Minneapolis that is welcoming to all.
- Minnesota Landscape Arboretum: A beautiful oasis dedicated to Minnesota's trees and flowers and Jolene's favorite place to visit.

- National Center for Transgender Equality: Working to change policies and society to increase understanding and acceptance of transgender people.
- Search Institute: A nonprofit organization that is dedicated to positive youth development and equity.
- Southern Poverty Law Center: An advocacy center that promotes racial justice.
- St. Louis Park Emergency Program (STEP): Emergency assistance for low-income families in Jolene's hometown.

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV 18. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Edina Chapel
5000 West 50th & Highway 100
Edina, MN 55436

Memorial Service

NOV 19. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Mayflower Congregational Church
106 E. Diamond Lake Road
Minneapolis, MN

Tribute Wall

KJ

“ For a variety of mysteries reasons, I return to memories of Jolene. Such embodied energy of love, grace, beauty and discernment. I have added her to my altar and in this practice period, she is foregrounded as an angel star in the sky of multitudes. Love and care to those who loved her and I specifically lift up her Beloveds, Gene, Micah and Eli.

kristin Johnstad - September 17, 2025 at 08:36 AM

KJ

“ Kristin Johnstad lit a candle in memory of Jolene Louise Roehlkepartain



kristin Johnstad - September 17, 2025 at 08:33 AM

SG

“ Dear Gene and family,
While I have only had the chance to 'meet' Jolene these past few years through zoom calls, I quickly came to appreciate her care, compassion, expertise and creativity evident in all her conversations. This touching tribute to her gives such insight into the wonderful person she was. My deepest condolences for your loss, I hope you can find comfort gathering to share her memories and celebrate her life.
warmly, Susan Gunderson

Susan Gunderson - November 18, 2022 at 10:46 AM



“ *Pretty Please was purchased for the family of Jolene Louise Roehlkepartain.*



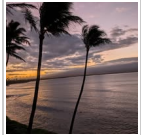
November 15, 2022 at 07:48 PM



“ *I know that Jolene was an amazing Mother. Such a sweet woman! Just reading her Facebook posts made my day! She found joy in nature and shared that with all of us. Praying for her family, so so very sorry for your loss.*



kathleen myrman - November 15, 2022 at 06:09 PM



“ *Karen-Marie Yust lit a candle in memory of Jolene Louise Roehlkepartain*



Karen-Marie Yust - November 14, 2022 at 06:24 PM