



Shirley Anne Kovacs

January 21, 1947 - March 23, 2022

Shirley Anne Kovacs, 75, of Fresno, passed away on March 23, 2022.

She was born January 21, 1947 in Berkeley, daughter of Emeral Wayne Hull and Inez Baumgartner Hull. Shirley has fond memories of gardening, fishing, and camping with her father, who was biomedical researcher, and taking Sunday drives to the zoo, orange groves, and the nearby ocean, mountains, and desert. Shirley remembers her mother as a smart, sweet, and talented woman often kept busy with child rearing and her career as a professor.

Her early life and education was in the Reseda neighborhood of Los Angeles, and Shirley later moved to West Covina where she attended and graduated from seven public schools, concluding with Edgewood High School. She made life-long friends in Robbie Wagner and Cathy DuToit while growing up in West Covina. She remembers the rapid creation of numerous public schools in West Covina at that time. Shirley delivered the valedictory for her high school graduating class. Pursuing a career in marine biology at the University of California at Santa Barbara, she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Zoology in 1968. Several long-lasting friendship made during her time in Santa Barbara were with Nancy Bartlett, Claudia Ward, Donnis Galvan, and Paddy Calistro. After college, she moved to Corvallis, earning a MS in Zoology in 1970 and a Ph.D. in Developmental Biology from Oregon State University in 1973. Beth Roseberry was a good friend and fellow student with Shirley during her time in Oregon.

Shirley was a post-doctoral researcher at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY in 1973 and at the M.D. Hubbell Research Center for Epilepsy in Buffalo, NY in 1974. She married David Allen Kovacs in June 1973, and the couple later divorced in 1988. She was a researcher in physiology and cell biology and a lecturer between 1974 and 1976 at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas. In 1976, Shirley moved to Columbia, MO and took on the role of research associate at the Cancer Research Center at the University of Missouri. She worked on several projects with Paul Agris including the molecular structure and antigenicity of autoimmune snRNPs, a new antibody system for undifferentiated connective tissue disease, and the cross-reactivity of human autoantibodies with plant nuclear antigens.

Beginning in 1979, Shirley began teaching for the Biology department at the University of Missouri, Columbia. Colleagues described her as a personable, hardworking, and an excellent instructor for general and cell biology courses. She also worked with the Department of Medicine from 1984 to 1986 at the University of Missouri. While in Missouri, Shirley made good friends with Andra Boak, Kay Marsh, Bill and Beth Cook, Hanna and Michal Gracz. Shirley gave birth to a son in 1978, Kent Forrest Kovacs, and a daughter in 1983, Elaine Sage Kovacs, during her time in Columbia. She remembers taking care of children, and visits to zoos and botanical gardens at nearby cities with her children. She remembers the people of Missouri as nice and as a people who spoke nicely.

In 1986, Shirley became an associate professor in the Biology Department at California State University (CSU) Fresno. The department recruited her for immunology expertise and for teaching courses at the upper division and graduate levels. From 1990 onward, Shirley was a professor in the Biology Department and on the governing board and later executive committee for the CSU Program for Education and Research in Biotechnology (CSUPERB).

Good friends made during this time include Howard Ono, Lenore Yousef, Gina Arce, and Satomi Hiyama. These friendships enriched her time at sporting events and music performances that she frequently attended in Fresno. Other friendships formed at Fresno State and strengthened through companionship on international trips were with Tom Mallory, Fraka Harmsen, and Helen Gigliotti.

Shirley kept busy as a researcher by serving as a principal investigator on grants from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. Shirley was also involved in the biotechnology outreach programs for secondary schools, and she received the 1996 excellence award for graduate teaching at CSU Fresno. Kent and Elaine grew up in Fresno, and their mom helped them in their schooling and ferried them about Fresno to visit with friends. Memorable family trips included visits to nearby Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks, Shaver Lake, Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Francisco, Monterey, Salinas, Pinnacles National Monument, and many more.

Shirley taught many courses while at Fresno State. These included a seminar on biotechnology, immunology lecture and lab, cell culture and hybridoma, general biology lecture and lab, biotechnology industry experience, bioscience, and Blood, Science, and Art. Shirley was major advisor for nineteen Master's students and the second or third reader for ten more students in Biology. A few of her students were Jennifer Gray (professor, Madera Community College), Klaudyne Hong (CEO of Peach IntelliHealth), Sarah Blanchard (Attorney for the State of CA, Fifth District Court of Appeals), Sharmila Vijay (Consultant, Gene Therapy), Valerie Silva (Teacher, Roosevelt High School), and Stacey Darling-Novak (professor, University of La Verne). Shirley was the first woman chair of the Biology Department from 2004 to 2008. She retired from Fresno State in 2014. Following retirement, Shirley

struggled with Alzheimer's disease and was cared for by her daughter in Georgia beginning in 2020.

Shirley had many interests and was fond of adventure. Her hobbies included travel, tennis, philharmonic performances, reading non-fiction, classic movies from her childhood, Sudoku, Fresno State basketball and football games, movie and television mysteries, gym/fitness classes, and education at the Fresno Chaffee Zoo. Shirley traveled to all fifty states and visited many countries around the world. Accompanied with travel friends, she visited Europe (England, Scotland, France, Germany, Italy, Balkans), Asia (China, India), New Zealand, Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia), South America (Ecuador, Peru), and the Middle East (Egypt, Jordan). Her 2009 visit to Africa was memorable for the beautiful wildlife and safari adventures. The 2013 and 2015 visits to China helped her learn about the country's cultural transformation. Shirley attended Fresno Philharmonic performances and Fresno State sports games with Lenore and Howard. She worked as a docent at the zoo with Carlene Tinker and Howard. Shirley loved learning and took short courses after retirement (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) on politics, philosophy, and art. She kept in touch with friends through her travels and Christmas cards (sometimes late to provide more feedback to her students on their lab books).

Shirley was preceded in death by her brothers, Kenneth Hull and Barry Hull, father Emeral Wayne Hull, mother Inez Baumgartner Hull, aunt Eleanor Reichardt, aunt Barbara Baumgartner, uncle Ernest Allen Baumgartner, uncle Myron Reichardt, uncle Samuel E. Hull, maternal grandmother Inez E. Baumgartner, maternal grandfather Ernest Baumgartner, paternal grandmother Mary E. Lewis, and paternal grandfather Samuel Stimpson Hull. Shirley is also preceded in death by the first wife of her brother Barry, Madeleine Hull, the second wife of her brother Barry, Caroline Hull, and the wife of her brother Ken, Jackie Hull.

Survivors include her son Kent Forrest Kovacs and his wife, Qiuqiong Huang, and their children, Anna Lin Kovacs and Samuel Rui Kovacs, of Fayetteville, AR; daughter Elaine Sage Kovacs and her husband, John Oxford, and their daughter, Irene Oxford of Duluth, GA; and, niece, Katie Hull of Ventura, CA. Shirley is also survived by cousins Russell Reichardt (Mary) of Missouri City, TX, William Reichardt (Nancy) of Bellaire, TX, and Patsy Koenig (Randy) of Katy, TX. A celebration of life ceremony will be at 2:00 pm, Saturday, May 28, 2022 at the Universalist Unitarian Church in Fresno with Howard Ono officiating.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Biology Department at California State University - Fresno, 2555 East San Ramon Ave, M/S SB73, Fresno, CA 93740, or to California State University - Fresno, 5241 N Maple Ave, Fresno, CA 93740.

Celebration of life ceremony will be livestreamed from the Universalist Unitarian Church site, If there are any issues with the livestream due to the signal, the service will be uploaded to our website within 24 hours. Family and friends may also leave condolences or video messages on Shirley's page at the Chapel of the Light Funeral Home.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAY 28. 2:00 PM (PT)

Unitarian-Universalist Church
2672 E. Alluvial Ave
Clovis, CA

Tribute Wall



“ 2 files added to the album Shirley



Elaine Kovacs - December 09, 2023 at 12:51 AM



“ Shirley Anne Kovacs

September 15, 2022 at 09:34 PM



“ Multicolor Pastel Standing Open Heart was purchased for the family of Shirley Anne Kovacs.



May 26, 2022 at 10:31 AM



“ Truly, Huang Family purchased the White Sympathy Standing Spray for the family of Shirley Anne Kovacs.



Truly, Huang Family - May 16, 2022 at 12:28 PM