

## Gen

*October 16, 2022 / Santa Fe New Mexican*

Our beloved Genevieve Head passed away peacefully at home on October 4<sup>th</sup>. She is survived by her husband, Courtney White, and their children Sterling and Olivia. Gen was born in Evanston, Illinois, in 1960 and moved with her family to Albuquerque when she was nine. After graduating from Manzano High, she attended Reed College where she met Courtney during orientation week of their freshman year. They were together for more than forty years. Choosing a career in archaeology, Gen earned a master's degree from UCLA, followed by a move to Santa Fe in 1991 to accept a job with the National Park Service as a researcher and project director. In 2008, she joined the NM



Department of Transportation's Cultural Resources section, eventually becoming its Tribal Consultation specialist. In 2015, inspired by Sterling and Olivia, she became active with the Upstart Crows, a youth Shakespeare troupe in Santa Fe. Gen will be remembered for her warm smile, her kindness, and her sunny outlook on life. She loved her family, archaeology, New Mexico, and all things Shakespeare. Despite her illness, she performed in an Upstart Crows' production of Hamlet last May. Gen loved to travel with her family and we have many fond memories of trips together to ranches, farms, forests, national parks, and sights in France and Italy. Sterling is a Reed graduate and lives in Portland, Oregon. Olivia graduated from Mount Holyoke College and lives in Northampton, Massachusetts. Gen was very proud to be their mother. We loved her and are extremely grateful to have had in her our lives. We will miss her every day.

*Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.*

- William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act 4 Scene 1

**Gail Marriner, minister (from the memorial service):**

We come together to remember Gen, to comfort one another, to cherish her memory, to celebrate her life. We cannot hope to capture the fullness of a life in a few moments of sharing here today but together we can begin a sketch of her life that is more nuanced and surprising than any portrait anyone of us might create alone. So let us take a moment to breathe together and be fully here in this moment, aware of the beauty and love that is here. Aware of the poignancy of this time. And as you rest in the silence I invite you to hear in your memory the echo of Gen's voice, I invite you to see her smile in your mind's eye, to remember her as you loved her best.



**Courtney:**

Welcome. I'm very happy you're here to help us celebrate Gen and her life. I ask your patience if things get teary. The support and the love that have been shared with myself, Olivia, and Sterling since Gen's passing has been incredible. One word that I kept reading was *special*. Gen was special. Her smile. Her warmth. Her kindness.



**Gen in high school**

Gen grew up in Evanston and moved to Albuquerque when she nine after her father passed away suddenly. It was an incredibly brave move by her mother Connie, a single mother with four children. Connie grew up in New Jersey. She no connections to New Mexico at all. She told me she just liked the name Albuquerque and decided to move there. Luckily for me because that move is how Gen and I met.

It happened on the first day of orientation week of Freshman year at Reed College, when my father spied New Mexico plates on a car in the dorm parking lot as I unpacked my stuff. We were from Arizona, so he struck up a conversation with Connie and moments later Gen and I were introduced to each other as fellow southwesterners.

We thought that was pretty cool. We danced together at a social later in the week and then went out on a few dates. I thought she was beautiful and charming and down-to-earth and had the greatest smile. I wasn't certain she was very impressed with me. But I persisted and the following summer she agreed to go on a short backpacking trip with me in the Valles Caldera. I drove all the way out from Phoenix, feeling thrilled. I picked her up at her house, but my truck broke down just short of the trailhead. I was pretty embarrassed, but Gen was game. We put on our backpacks and did the hike anyway. We slept in a rock shelter under a starry New Mexico sky. The next day we embarked on a hitchhiking adventure, winding up in Los Alamos at the house of a college friend. The whole thing was crazy and fun. Most importantly, we learned that did really well together!

It was start of many adventures to come over the ensuing forty-four years.

I'll mention just a few. At the start of our Junior year, we took a memorable road trip from Albuquerque to Reed, camping in national parks and forests. Gen played the guitar and I took photos. We listened to 8-track tapes on the car stereo the whole way over and over – how



**At Reed**





*In a coffee shop at Sequoia NP*

many people remember 8-tracks? They were big. After that trip, hiking and camping became our thing, as well as an itch to travel.

At Reed, we got our first taste of Shakespeare together when we decided to hitchhike from Portland to Ashland in southern Oregon to attend the famous Shakespeare festival. We mostly caught rides with people who kept offering us marijuana. We saw a great production of Macbeth, kicking off a forty-year Shakespeare habit.

Gen started out at Reed as a theater major. She wanted to be outdoors, however, so she decided to become an archaeologist. She spent three summers working as a crew chief on a survey project west of Albuquerque run by Cynthia Irwin-Williams. Next

came graduate school at UCLA, followed by fieldwork all over the LA basin for various contractors, often in the company of our friend Lisa LeCount.

Our adventures continued in LA. We lived in a tiny apartment in West Hollywood. On weekends we went everywhere. Mountains, deserts, hikes, trips to Sequoia. We travelled with our first dog, Sutro, who Gen discovered shivering in the cold in Reno, Nevada, where she worked briefly. His adoption started another wonderful 40-year tradition for us.

In 1988, Gen began working for the National Park Service as a crew chief for the Bandelier Archaeological Survey, here in New Mexico, which was run by Bob Powers, who became a dear friend along with his wife Willow. In 1991, Bob offered her a full-time job, requiring a move to Santa Fe, which we were very eager to do. A whole new adventure! We stayed with our friend James Snead at his house who kindly gave us our first tour of this mysterious and beautiful place called Santa Fe.



*Sutro*



*Our wedding – May 23, 1992*



*Jim, Marcus, and Rol*

Somewhere in here it occurred to us we should actually get married! Gen's mother had given up on us and seemed perplexed at our announcement. We had a lovely wedding up at Bob and Willow's house and many of you were there.

After Gen's job with the Park Service ended, she started a small consulting business. In 2008, she joined the Environment Department at NM DOT, eventually becoming the department's Tribal liaison. It was a job that brought together all of Gen's wonderful qualities: her graciousness, her inherent respect for people and cultures, her intelligence, her diligence, her sunniness. To honor Gen, her coworkers will be planting a tree on the DOT campus next week.



Meanwhile, there were lots of other adventures – you saw many of them in the slide show. A honeymoon in the Yucatan among Mayan ruins. The early years of Quivira with all the visits to ranches, and farms, and national parks. The trips to Europe that we made together, which I will always treasure. And of course, the greatest and most rewarding adventure of all: parenting. Gen felt extraordinarily blessed to be the mother of Sterling and Olivia and it made her very happy to be a part of their lives and help them grow and blossom into the wonderful people they are today.



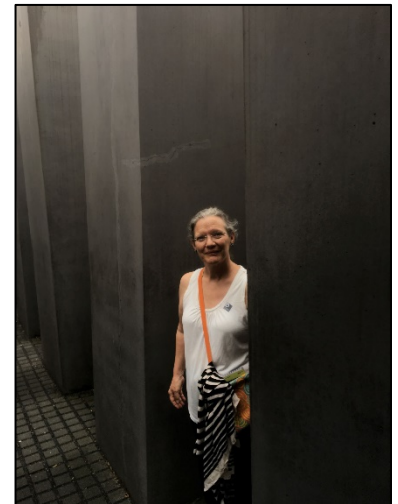
***Honeymoon in Mexico***



***Paris***



***Beijing***



***Berlin***



***Florence***



***Provence***



***Prague***



***Dordogne***



***Provence***



There was one adventure that Gen would have happily skipped - becoming a cancer patient. Some of you may not know, but Gen was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer sixteen and a half years ago – and I want to thank all the doctors and nurses involved in Gen’s treatment for giving her that much time. It’s a type of cancer without a cure, as we learned during our first visit to Dr. Wollin at Cedars-Sinai in LA. There’s an old saying that the first day you get news like that is the first day you begin to grieve. But Gen refused to grieve. She insisted we turn the whole thing into another adventure. And we did. Train trips and long car rides with the kids. Disneyland. The beach. Museums. Hotels. Restaurants. Through the many, many trips to Cedars for checkups and treatments, Gen remained positive and stoic and resilient.



*At Barney’s Beanery in LA after a hospital visit (2008)*



*Clinical trial (2019)*

One quick story: in 2014 Gen was enrolled in a major clinical trial involving an experimental drug that had to be flown in from Italy. The medicine was radioactive and required everyone to stand in hall, doctors included, as it was injected into Gen’s arm. She endured three rounds of this treatment over a number of years and did so with amazing fortitude. The purpose of the medicine was to delay the cancer’s spread and it worked. In fact, the trial was so successful the FDA approved the drug – which made her happy. She loved helping others and it meant a lot to her that she helped pioneer a treatment that would enrich other people’s lives.

In the past few years, as her cancer became less of an adventure, Gen still refused to grieve. She

pushed on, determined to live her life. She didn’t complain and she didn’t want anyone fussing over her – except maybe for me. If she were here today, she’d probably think we were fussing too much. Her determination saw her through Hamlet last May, as many of you know. To me, those performances were pure Gen - brave, funny, earnest, joyous, and a delight. It’s how she approached life and how I will always remember her – that and



*Twelfth Night (June 2021)*



*Hamlet (May 2022)*



her amazing smile. Which I miss. Which we all miss. I take some comfort knowing that Gen would want us to push on in our lives, go places, do good things, laugh, tell stories. Be resilient. That may be the best way to honor her memory and share the blessing of having Gen and her smile in our lives.



*At home (September 2022)*



**Olivia:**

To begin, I have to be honest: I don't know what to say. I don't know how to say it. I don't know where to start or if there's even a way to.

How do you summarize the life of your mother? How can you find words to encompass that amount of love, that amount of joy, or the depth of this sorrow? How can I find words to say I much I love her or how terribly miss her?



***Gen, Olivia, Connie, and Sterling***

Simply put, I can't. Words are too small, too delicate, too definite. My love for my mother, and her love for her family, her friends, the world around her, is too big, too strong to fit in the shape of these little words.

But my mom loved words, as I do.

She loved poetry and she loved Shakespeare. She used to find words she loved and tape those quotes around our kitchen. And when my brother and I were younger,

she would read aloud to us, whether it was a novel in the fading light of a camping trip, or a picture book with the two of us, too young to read ourselves, perched on her lap. It is in those moments and those words, the sound of her voice and the shape of her handwriting, that I still find her presence and her love.

It is memories like these, these little moments, that stick with me. My life is made of them because, very simply, my entire life is one big, beautiful memory of my mom. So, what can I tell you, when I want to tell you everything, knowing it would take nearly 24 years to do so, and every time I think of a memory to share, there is another, just as strong, just as important, running at its heels?

I can tell you that she gave the best, warmest hugs, just as she had the best, warmest smile.

I can tell you that she made the best biscochitos. And the best piecrust and the best gravy at Thanksgiving.

I can tell you about every Sunday my mom and I spent walking dogs at the local animal shelter. And of the love and care she poured into taking care of our own four-legged family members.





I can tell you how she always brought me the perfect cup of tea when I was sick. Or bring me cookies before I even know I needed them. I can tell you how she used to make up melodies, some with their own wonderful words, to sing to us when we little and couldn't sleep.



I can tell you of mornings in the kitchen, discussing Shakespeare over coffee, or running lines together in the evenings. Or I can tell you of drives to and from town discussing life and its complexities or simply the latest song on the radio. I can tell you of hikes or of road trips or of concerts, of Halloweens and Christmases. I can tell you and I can tell you and I can tell you and it will never be enough.

So, I will leave you with two last memories, even though they too, feel so small. I can tell you how, whenever we travelled, she

would pause to take picture of her feet and the ground beneath them. How she found interest and worth in something most would not think twice about – in the texture of the ground that supports us, in the changing patterns of cobblestone streets, or the colorful blanket of leaves layered beneath her boots.



It is that interest in life, that love for beauty in even the simplest of things, that ability to change perspective and look at the world in a new, yet solidly grounded way – embodied in those pictures of her shoes scattered through our files – that defines, in some way, who my mom was. They are a statement of presence, of love, of connection. One I will always hold on to. One I find in my own pictures of my own sneakers and the ground beneath them.

And I can tell you how my most prized possession is a post-it note, already now curled and fading, I found hidden in my suitcase after my parents dropped me off for my freshman year of college. It has three simple words – “we love you” – written in my mom's neat, round handwriting and enclosed in a

heart. It is still hanging in my room.

Now, as I stumble through my own, little words, I find that it all returns to that post-it note. All the stories I want to share, all the memories nestled in my mind, all the words I cannot find or capture or get to sit still – it all boils down in some inexplicable, too-small way, to those three words.

So, Mama, if you can hear me and even if you can't:

I love you.  
I love you.  
I love you.  
Thank you.





## Sterling:

We say that saying goodbyes are hard, but they never tell you that some are so difficult that you can't even say them. How do you say goodbye to someone who has been there your whole life? I don't know, and I don't think I ever will.

My mom was unwaveringly kind. She was stubborn,

resilient, and cared so fiercely for those that she loved.

She was the one who edited my college essays before I turned them in. Who rubbed my back when I pulled a muscle. The person I called when a relationship ended. Who I sat with and watched the sunset. Who took me to my lessons, practices and rehearsals. Who helped me pick out a shirt for prom and a suit for my first internship.

She raised me. Taught me to be kind, to think before I speak, to see the best in everyone. She gave me my love of history, theater, and people.

She made the best biscochitos and she loved to take photos of her shoes wherever we traveled.

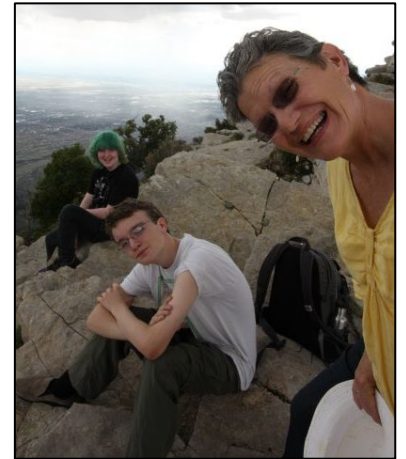
There are not enough minutes in a lifetime to show how much she loved us, or how much we love her.

I want to leave you with a quote from a small yellow bear in a red shirt with no pants: "How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."

How lucky I have been to have had you as my mother.

How lucky we all were to have known you.

I miss you mom and love you so much.







Gen's life as a kid was fearless, courageous, a little crazy and filled with lots of laughter. Genevieve, Ellen, and I spent every weekend together including weeks together on the farm during the summer. Gen and I had to share a bed and a horse. We'd laugh literally until we wet our pants. We fell off horses laughing. When I was little, I was afraid and Genevieve would always tell me to buck up – "you can do this."

- Elizabeth Head



*Head Family in the Evanston House (Gen circled)*



**Head Family reunion at Uncle Charles' farm, Illinois (1994)**



**Gen, Anne, Ellen, and Elizabeth in Honduras (1997)**



As I think about Gen, I remember long hours in the Department of Anthropology's computer room at UCLA working to get ideas on paper as first-year graduate students; surviving crappy CRM projects in southern California; and the stunningly beautiful late afternoons spent drinking gin & tonics after a long day of survey on the Pajarito Plateau. No one shared with me so much history, so much struggle, so much joy and success. I believe we became better people for knowing each other. I miss her terribly.

- Lisa LeCount



Being around Gen during the work at Bandelier was a formative part of my life. She was so competent and encouraging that she seemed older than she was, but she always had a good sense of humor about it. The first summer I joined the survey, we were camping at Frijolito and in the dark I couldn't find my tent. I joined late in the season, when the crews had pitched their tents far apart. I wandered around trying to solve my problem and ended up at Gen's tent sniffing and cold. She was such an anchor for that project. Through all the years, Gen was patient and kind, generous but realistic, wise, and far-seeing. I was so happy that she was my bridesmaid at our wedding, literally carrying my dress from ceremony to reception. She was like love itself.

- Monica Smith



She was one of my closest friends at Reed College. Always up for adventure, including playing pool at the Lutz and guzzling pitchers of Miller Beer. We were housemates and travel buddies, exploring the Oregon Coast and commiserating about the rain and the late hours studying. Also, many times it wasn't just Gen, it was Gen and Courtney, and I was lucky to have two friends that kind of looked out for me. After college, we stayed in touch and I could always find refuge in their house in Los Angeles and later Santa Fe. We hiked and took our kids to the Natural History Museum. I just assumed we would grow old together. She was kind-hearted, smart, and funny...a true friend. The kind of person you feel privileged to know.

- Annette Gardner





I can't remember our first meeting at Reed, but Gen and I soon became fast friends and colleagues in the study of anthropology, sharing a library desk together. She was always there to anchor and support me, share ideas and notes, and remind each other about assignments. And laugh, a lot. I had a lot going on in my personal life outside of school (a mother dying) and she had recently had a back surgery, which required particular sitting positions, but none of that mattered as we lost ourselves in the ancient ruins of Teotihuacan...Her love and wisdom and gave everything traction. That is the best, the



highest kind of love - that which celebrates the spirit of the other. Well, imagine my surprise when, some twenty years later, while working on watershed conservation in Arizona, I am introduced to a ranching group called Quivira Coalition based in Santa Fe, run by someone named Courtney White! It was such a grand reunion at that time. Then as Quivira began to have such an enormous influence on my artistic direction, I enjoyed many conference trips up to NM to continue these great conversations, and meet a whole new family of colleagues, for which I will always be grateful. When I first got the inspiration to work with grasses, Gen was one of the first people I shared the idea with. She smiled and nodded and 'got it' - boom. That is how great things happen - it just takes one other mind to sense the same connection. She shared with me an essay by Kansas Senator Ingalls where he described grasses as being "the benediction of nature" - and voila - therein began the title of my work for the next twenty years.

Benediction is what I think of when I think of Gen. Kindness, wisdom, patience, compassion. Deep understanding. I think that's what she would want us to sense from her now, too. The balm of well-wishes, the blessing of friendship, which for me will always be there.

- Matilda Essig



I can still see her stomping around Bandelier in that beat-up straw hat of hers, exiting that old red pickup on the first day of the field season, bent over lithic samples amidst the pinon-juniper, and her fashion statement pairing high-top sneakers with a chiffon dress at our end-of-the-year party. Then there was the time we happily mixed margaritas at the Forked Lightning Ranch on the Pecos survey while defiantly still in our NPS uniforms.

Gen wore the hat of director, teacher, and counselor, successfully and steadfastly dealing with all the research, logistical, bureaucratic, and personal challenges that go with overseeing a multi-year survey project and 15+ young adult egos. She managed to lead without ever being authoritarian, deal with problems with unfailing evenhandedness, and succeeded at that delicate balance of being both the boss and a friend. She will be missed and remembered by many.

- Sue Eininger



As a “recovering Park Ranger” that had been tapped to be an investigator/Special Agent with the interagency ARPA (Archaeological Resources Protection Act) Task Force, based here in Santa Fe, my first memory of you was early 90s when catching your smile on the patio of the Old Santa Fe Trail Building. Doing undercover work with “misguided public lands users” was contrary and paradoxical to me. I was wrestling with that and battling the bureaucracy when you smiled my way. Your warm greeting was accepting and comforting. It has stayed with me these thirty years. These last few years, especially the past two, I lost track of your dance: I was busy choreographing my steps with pancreatic cancer. As you know, it hasn’t been easy: chemo, radiation, surgery, side-effects procedures, hospitalizations, etc. Every day is painful, but through it all the value of a positive mental attitude comes shining through. When I first heard you’d gone ahead, I instantly saw your smile and knew that it is OK. Thanks for being you, Gen.

- Phil Young



I had hoped that I could push back my tears long enough to share how much I loved Gen. She was a friend, an amazing mother, and a teammate. I turned to Gen often for guidance and grounding. In Gen’s thoughtful silence, she communicated so much understanding, listening, and love. I believe that is why she was so amazing at working with our tribal partners. I like going to tribal meetings to connect and build relationships, but always feel a little self-conscious because I talk far too much and interrupt more often than I should. I have never been grounded or silent for long. I have tried and tried to tap into my inner Gen, but have a long way to go.

I want to say thank you to Gen for your wonderful (rum-infused) biscochitos, homemade apple pie, and Trader Joe’s cookies. Thank you for your patience and understanding. Thank you for opening your doors to my family for so many Halloweens. Thank you for your stories about chickens, foster dogs, bobcats, food, and family. Thank you! I am so grateful to have had Gen in my life.

- Jennifer Mullins, NMDOT

It was such a pleasure working with Gen for the past decade. She always had something interesting to say and a conversation always ended with a laugh.

- Trent Botkin, NMDOT

Gen and I were the clowns in the gravediggers scene in Hamlet. We drove a lawn mower onto the stage. I was driving and Gen kind of sat on the side as we came onto stage. One night it was sold out and there were extra chairs up front and in one of them an old man sat blocking our way. Gen and I talked to each other and came up with this plan to get him to move. We said together as loud as we could ‘Move Thy Ass!’ She was an amazing actor and a hilarious person.

- Rylie Philpot





I will always remember Ms. Head as a cheerful person and a very resilient individual. It was amazing to see how she carried on with dignity despite the increasing hardship her illness brought. She always had a clarity of what she wanted to do.

- Dr. Kathryn Chan

Gen was that steady North Star for so many of us.

- Rick and Heather Knight

She loved being an archaeologist. She loved her work thoroughly without any motivation from ego...because she didn't have one. She just enjoyed the work. That's what made her such a good crew chief, co-worker, and mentor to so many up-and-coming archaeologists. I hope she realized how others looked up to her.

- Judy Reed

She was one of the kindest, sweetest people we've ever known.

- Ernie and Elsbeth Atencio



## Wild Geese

by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
For a hundred miles through the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
Loves what it does.  
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
Are moving across the landscapes,  
Over the prairies and the deep trees,  
The mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
Are heading home again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
The world offers itself to your imagination,  
Calls to you like wild geese, harsh and exciting –  
Over and over announcing your place  
In the family of things.



**Gail Marriner, minister:**

We live on in our children and our families, in every life we touched, in the work that we did, in the things we loved. But our reach is far longer than we realize. We live on in every life our loved ones touch, in every paper built on our work, in every person who is sustained by the smallest echo of the love we shared in the course of our lives. And Gen's life, her passions, her sense of humor will echo through our lives and through us onward across time – touching the lives of people who will never have known her.

Each time we look at the beautiful landscapes of northern new Mexico and wonder about its deep history and we will remember her.

When we revel in the words of the Bard – reading them, speaking them, delighting in the young people performing them, she will be there with us sharing our pleasure.

When we hear the phrases of Mary Oliver's poetry we will feel her presence with us ...

This poem from Mary Oliver provides fitting closing words:

*To live in this world you must be able to do three things:  
to love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go, to let it go.*

Go in peace Gen, carried by our love and cradled by the love which holds us all.











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