

Mary Luce Kasper

1945 - 2021

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[Ellen Boyers Kwatnoski](#) (GWHS – SF, Class of S'63) shared a link.



MARY LUCE

George Washington High School, Class of S'1963

I'm so sorry to tell you all that Mary Luce Kasper passed away on November 10, 2021. I've been in touch with her daughter-in-law who asked me to send stories, memories, special sayings -- anything I could remember about Mary that would illuminate who she was and how she lived. She's planning to compile a book from these stories for her daughter, who is too young to have known her grandmother. If you have any memories to share, PM me and I'll send you my email.

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Mary Luce Kasper 1945 - 2021

Florence , MA — Mary Luce Kasper died November 10th at Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton, from complications of cancer.

She was born September 13, 1945 in San Francisco, to Raymond and Berenice Nudd Luce. Her early life was difficult, particularly after her mother died when she was 11. By age 18, after leaving college, she was supporting herself, hanging out in North Beach, and making her way in the nascent hippie scene. Among many jobs, she worked at the Esalen Institute and for movie director Richard Lester when he made Petulia. In the January 1968 issue of 'Look' magazine, she appeared in "The Originals," one of Irving Penn's portrait photographs of San Francisco's counterculture. Later, in 2007, she was an interviewee in PBS's American Experience documentary, "The Summer of Love."

In the fall of 1968, when Nixon was elected president, Mary left the States wearing a peace symbol mini-dress, carrying a chartreuse suitcase and no foreign cash. Fortunately, on the ferry from Calais to Dover she fell in with a couple of Americans who paid for her train ticket to London...one was Michael Kasper, with whom, the following year, Mary set off, first to Morocco, then across North Africa, through Greece and Turkey, and overland from Istanbul to India. They were married in New Delhi in 1970.

In 1971, they settled in Vancouver, Canada, where Mary was active in the feminist movement and where their son Toby was born. They moved to Florence in 1977 and shortly after, Mary earned a Master Weaver Certificate from the Hill Institute. Around that time, she was also part of a group that published The Community Times/Northampton Herald, an alternative newspaper, and produced concerts, including the unforgettable "Punka-Polka."

Early in the 1980's, Mary began weaving in earnest, dyeing the wool herself for large colorsapes that functioned as floor rugs. She started selling her work at local fairs, and within a few years was showing regularly at some of the most prestigious craft exhibitions in the country, including those sponsored by the Smithsonian and Philadelphia Museums.

In 1990, Mary and Bob Cilman were named Co-Coordinator of the Northampton Arts Council. Over the next decade, they garnered many grants and awards for their inventive fundraising, their public art, and their advocacy for artists generally; during their tenure, one journalist named Northampton the "#1 Best Small Arts Town in America." Even after leaving the Arts Council, she continued to be active in local politics, including as an assistant to Mayor Mary Ford and as a member of several citywide committees.

She returned to weaving full-time around 2000. She developed a new body of work inspired by South African beaded-blanket traditions, which she encountered on several trips there. She retired in 2010.

She is survived, and sorely missed, by Michael; by Toby, his wife Amy Wang, and their daughter Ilo, of Brooklyn; by her brother and sister-in-law, John and Judy Luce, of San Francisco; by several nieces and nephews; and by many

friends.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Mary's name can be made to the Dakin Humane Society and to [Doctors Without Borders](#). In line with her wishes, there will be no public service.

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