

In Memoriam - Lori Malloy (cont'd)

LORI MALLOY

October 21, 1967 - December 1, 2025

Lori Clay Malloy is gone. Her being - everything she was physically to everyone she knew personally - left this life on the morning of Monday, December 1, 2025 in Austin, Texas. She was 58 - and absolutely deserved more time to keep being.



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But Lori deeply understood, respected, and loved the “nature” of the natural world. No rules, no doctrine, no fate - just a swirl of beauty and madness, wonder and sadness, to be revered and honored through a constant, curious quest for better understanding.

Magnetic, yet enigmatic - Lori's solar-powered passions for birds, butterflies, baking, bartending, crafting, cooking, quilting, photography, and so much more - drew others close, fascinated to learn from and with her, though she never betrayed her fierce sense of independence and agency. Lori lived, loved, and left us as her own true self - a fully-realized, and remarkably beautiful, human being.

Lori was wicked smart, stunningly creative, darkly funny, and mischievously playful. From photo editor to science writer, pastry chef to publications designer, rollergirl to nanny, bartender to reseller, interpretive guide to Assistant Director of the National Butterfly Center - Lori's existence was a shimmering kaleidoscope of truly enviable talents and deeply lived experiences.

Now, her being is gone. But her spirit - every way she is sensed by everyone she has impacted - lives on. She continues becoming through others.

The most breathtaking testament to that relay of becoming is the Monarch butterfly-like generational migration of her two beloved children, Luna Theia and Liam Orion. Lori was always her most radiant when effortlessly expressing the endless capacity for caring, empathy, kindness, and unconditional love she brought to motherhood. The lifetime library of loving learnings that Lori bequeathed upon her children will become osmotically obvious to anyone who knows Luna and Liam. They both glow with her sun-drenched warmth, shimmer with her sugar-infused creativity, crackle with her stinging wit, and hum with her electric curiosity.

Lori was selective in the other beings she let in most closely. That short list included her cosmically soul-bound beagle, Porkchop, along with her other deeply beloved canine and feline family members; her fiercely loyal inner-circle of friends; and her 30-year friend, partner, and husband, Max. Some have gone already, while others live on - but all have undergone a fundamental change for the better, wiser, and warmer from their time with Lori.

Because Lori is gone, but not at all lost. She will always be found in the flutter of butterflies painting our pollinator gardens; in the blissful bite of tequila or mezcal in the perfectly mixed drink; in the dazzle of hummingbirds hovering over nectar feeders; in the mouth-watering forkful of warm gingerbread with freshly whipped maple cream; in the ethereal calls of the screech owls emerging from their backyard boxes at dusk; and in the radiant beams of southwest sun that Lori followed like a beacon of becoming. She will forever be found, and longingly loved, in all those places.

A Life Illustrated: Lori - The Celestial Sun of Life

After Lori's terminal brain cancer diagnosis in November of 2023 - I felt shock, sadness, and a looming sense of pending loss that felt impossible to put into words.

Not having any notion of time we had left together, I immediately started seeking meaningful ways to honor the impact Lori has had on me, and our shared family's life.

Shortly after her diagnosis, it was a chance encounter at the Austin Armadillo Christmas Art Bazaar, which had become a bit of a family holiday tradition, that provided the inspiration for what came next.

Lori and I met a local artist named Kevin Tong who was displaying some of the most breathtakingly beautiful illustrations I had ever seen. His artwork had this astounding sense of wonder, mystery, and vitality that imagined a swirl of the natural world, science, and humanity - while in a way teasing the haunting magic and mysticism behind it all. It didn't hurt either that Kevin had created several truly eye-popping creations featuring birds, flora/fauna, movies, and science/science fiction that were just such cool and creative takes on the things Lori and I always enjoyed together. I ended up purchasing one of his prints that celebrated Austin, Texas as the 'City of the Violet Crown' (an adapted version of his 'Litha' print).

You can see more of Kevin's work here: <https://tragicsunshine.com>

After the holidays of 2023, I reached out to Kevin asking if he'd ever consider working on a commissioned illustration that would be a celebration of someone's amazing connection to the natural world and her family. In those conversations, Kevin was every bit as creative, kind, and caring as you'd imagine an artist of his caliber to be. After some thoughtful discussion around vision, scope and scale, we agreed on a direction for a personalized creation illustrating 'Lori - The Celestial Sun of Life'.

For the first part of 2024, I worked to provide details to Kevin of all of Lori's favorite natural elements, flora and fauna, and special visual representations of what she held most dear. Lori had so many 'favorites', that it was hard to choose, but each one I shared had a story and a context important to her, and us.

I just knew that at the center of it all needed to be Lori - beaming like the sun. She was always happiest when bathed in southwest sunlight, as it fed her soul battery as much as it fed the plants, insects and animals she loved. And of course, the print also needed to include a reference to her beloved second home in Mission, Texas - a converted RV where she lived while she worked as Assistant Director of the National Butterfly Center and continued getaway spot for spending time in the Rio Grande Valley. She adored that place, with its direct views of a pond brimming with migrating birds and butterflies, moon-

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bathing moths and critters, and her screened 'party porch', where evenings were filled with music, laughter, and enough lime, blood orange, hibiscus syrup, tequila and mezcal to ensure regular, spirited fiestas.

And so throughout 2024 and into early 2025, Kevin worked to bring all that into a final piece that was completed earlier this year. Not only did the artwork itself turn out to be stunningly beautiful - but Kevin's work with a local printer to ensure the final print had these incredibly thoughtful elements of subtle foils and lamination to make it all 'shimmer' like Lori did in life.

I waited to reveal the print to Lori until I could find a way and time that felt meaningful and afforded me some time to bring the reveal to life by using some tools to animate elements of the illustrated artwork and putting it to video. Her birthday on October 21 of this year seemed the perfect time to share the print with her. She was blown away, and absolutely adored the piece - truly touched by the way Kevin captured her spirit, essence and energy surrounded by everything that meant the most to her. It's hanging proudly in our home, and we'll be donating a framed print to be displayed at the National Butterfly Center in Mission, Texas.

The artwork and reveal video are presented here in honor of everything Lori continues to represent to all of us.

Reveal Video:

<https://youtu.be/uZVFDkGK1Kse>

