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Johanna Goldschmid

1945 - 2020




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Johanna Goldschmid

April 22, 1945 - October 25, 2020

Johanna Goldschmid, aged 75, passed away on October 25, 2020, after battling advanced lung cancer. She died in her home of over 50 years on Potrero Hill, San Francisco.

Johanna reveled in the small details and daily pleasures of life: a cup of tea in the morning, reading in the afternoon sun, her beloved ginkgo tree turning yellow in the fall, a piece of dark chocolate during a foreign film festival at the Castro Theatre. The pleasure she took in everyday rituals was well captured in her life philosophy: "want what you have, and you'll always have what you want." She had a wry sense of humor and laughed easily.

Johanna was born in Shelton, Washington, to Phyllis and Otto Goldschmid. She attended college at University of Puget Sound before transferring to University of Washington where she earned a degree in English and Anthropology in 1967, focusing on the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest. She was an avid skier and scheduled her college classes so she could go skiing twice a week. After graduation, she lived in Austria for a year studying German, hiking and skiing the Alps.

For someone who claimed she chose her job based on how she preferred to spend a rainy day – surrounded by books – she had an impressive career of public service. After earning a Master in Library Sciences from the University of Washington in 1969, she began working for the San Francisco Public Library as a reference librarian. After working at various branches and the Bay Area Reference Center, in 1974 she took a year leave to study bookbinding at the Centro Del Bel Canto in Ascona, Switzerland. Upon her return, she served for ten years (1977-87) as the head of the Rare Books and Special Collections Department of the SFPL, during which she met and married Ken Miller. After the birth of their daughter in 1987 she worked part-time through the library's reorganization after the Loma Prieta earthquake. In 1996 she moved into Information Services, embracing the shift to computers and the internet despite her love of the old card catalogue system. Rising to the challenge, she educated herself on this revolutionary information technology so that she could teach weekly public classes on how to access the internet. She ended her tenure at the SFPL as manager of the Information Services Department of the Main Library where she was beloved by her staff. She retired in 2011 after 42 years at the SFPL.

She was active in the book arts community as a member of the Hand Bookbinders of California (1975-2005), where she served on the board of directors and as president, and the Pacific Center for the Book Arts (1978-2005) where she served on the board and as treasurer. She delivered numerous lectures and demonstrations on bookbinding, book

conservation and paper marbling.

After her retirement, she became a docent at the Asian Art Museum which perfectly combined her passion for Buddhist art, her love of the old Main Library building (where the Asian Art Museum lives) and her three-mile daily walk from Potrero Hill to Civic Center. Her many other passions included practicing Iyengar yoga, playing classical guitar, doing Chinese brush painting, gardening, traveling Europe (including after reconnecting with Heinz Havas, an Austrian boyfriend of her youth), swimming in the bay with the Dolphin Club and organizing and translating the Viennese family archive.

Johanna endured her three-year battle with cancer with characteristic grace, humor and dedication to enjoyment of the present moment. She spent her final months cared for by her daughter and sister in her beautiful home surrounded by her collections of antique books and kilim rugs.

She is survived by her daughter, Linden Miller, her sister, Lisa Goldschmid, her brother-in-law, Larry Gonick; two nieces Anna Goldschmid Gonick and Sophie Goldschmid Gonick, and ex-husband and dear friend, Ken Miller.

A virtual memorial service will be held over Zoom on Sunday, January 31, 2021 at 2:00 pm PST. Donations in memory of Johanna may be made to Friends of the SFPL, Friends of the Urban Forest, Society for Asian Art or a [charity of your choice](#).