

Ann L. Nelson



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Ann L. Nelson MONTPELIER - Ann L. Nelson, for over 35 years a speech therapist who worked with children and families in central Vermont, Japan, New Zealand and Ireland, combining a vocation she loved with a lifelong passion for living abroad, died at Central Vermont Hospital on Sept. 28, 2018. She was 64. Ann was born **on Jan. 17, 1954**, at Fort Benning, **Georgia**. Her father, Robert H. Harrington, was **a career Army officer** teaching ROTC at Auburn University in Alabama. Her mother, Joyce Kaufmann Harrington, for reasons apparently appreciated by only a few, insisted that her third child be delivered in Georgia rather than Alabama. As her family joined her father at military postings, **Ann lived as a young girl in Japan, Germany, Virginia and London** before settling in Montpelier, her father's hometown, on his retirement from the Army in the early-'60s. Throughout her life, Ann carried fond memories of her experiences living abroad as part of an Army family. Ann attended middle and high school in Montpelier, and she graduated from Montpelier High School in 1972. She spent the ensuing months working at **the Mount Mansfield Trout Club, making canvas tote bags** and sails in Kennebunk, Maine, and living in a chalet on a mountainside in Switzerland. When she returned to Vermont, Ann enrolled at Lyndon State College, where she ultimately earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English. Her Lyndon State studies were interrupted, however, when she responded to a poster on a bulletin board announcing opportunities to study in Denmark through the Scandinavian Seminar program. **She arrived in Denmark at the age of 18**, lived for a summer with a Danish farm family in northern Jutland, and enrolled as the only English-speaking student at a Folk High School in Sovring in rural Jutland. She became fluent in Danish and, after a stay of three years, earned an undergraduate degree from **the University of Odense** on the Danish island of Funen. While in Odense, **Ann married Preben Hansen**, a Dane, and they lived together on a Danish commune while Ann bicycled daily to take classes and to work at a mushroom nursery and a tulip farm. She was so well-liked by her Danish co-

workers that she was allowed to continue planting tulips even after discovering that she had been planting many of them upside down. **Ann returned to Vermont in the mid-'70s to help care for her mother**, who was nearing the end of a long illness. **Her marriage to Preben ended**, and Ann finished her studies at Lyndon State before enrolling in the **paralegal course at Woodbury Associates in Montpelier**. She completed the Woodbury program in 1978. While at Woodbury, **Ann met many interesting people, among them John Nelson**, who **instructed her in classes covering American legal studies and civil litigation**. **Ann and John were married in Duxbury, Vermont, on Dec. 20, 1980**. Ann worked for a semester as a speech aide at the Waterbury Elementary School, and decided to combine her love of language with her enthusiasm for being with young children by pursuing a graduate degree in speech language pathology at the University of Vermont. **She earned an M.A. in speech pathology in 1982** and began her career as an SLP. In **1983, Ann and John's daughter, Emily, was born**. They lived in Duxbury before moving to Montpelier in **1985**. As an SLP, Ann worked for extended periods with young children and their families at schools in Washington County, as well as early child care centers in the Montpelier area. She continued to pursue her love of Scandinavia by working as a tour leader for the Elderhostel and Road Scholars programs for over 30 summers. She led tours in the Scandinavian countries and East Europe. Ann took leave from her work in Vermont on several occasions, notably to work for a year with the children of **U.S. Navy personnel in Yokohama, Japan**; a year at a school for children with special needs in **Auckland**, New Zealand; and another year with social services agencies in **Dublin**, Ireland. As a young child, Emily joined her mother to attend schools in Japan and New Zealand. Throughout her life, Ann sought opportunities to learn new skills and pursue new interests. She preferred to live in, rather than visit, wherever her travels led. She practiced the art of Japanese flower arrangement while in Yokohama, visited Maori settlements in New Zealand and became a member of a philosophy seminar at Trinity College, Dublin. She was physically active and somewhat competitive from childhood, when she participated in swim meets in London, to her adult interests in tennis, horseback riding and, in particular, figure skating. She spent a significant amount of time as a young girl standing on her head. Ann finished her professional career working with the early childhood program at the Montpelier Public Schools. She loved working with children from birth to age 5, and in the course of her work, she felt privileged to visit with scores of families in their homes. She always arrived at the door with a smile on her face, a belief that the family she was with had special qualities, and a toy in her bag. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and it never waned. Ann Nelson is

survived by **John Nelson, her husband of 38 years**; her daughter, Emily and her partner, Erik Moon, of Berlin, Vermont; and their children Simon Moon and Adrianna Moon. She is also survived by her brothers and sister Paul Harrington and his wife, Nancy, of Middlesex; Robert Harrington and his wife, Denise, of Dover, New Hampshire; and Harriet Johnson, of Montpelier. She leaves three nieces and three nephews. Her nieces are Rebecca Harrington, of Fort Worth, Texas, Rachel Harrington, of Provincetown, Massachusetts, and Annie Harrington Lalor, of Fort Lewis, Washington. Her nephews are Michael Harrington, of Enfield, New Hampshire, Alex Johnson, of Montpelier, and Nathan Johnson, of Burlington, Vermont. She also leaves a brother-in-law, Robert Nelson, of Palos Verdes, California; and the families of his four sons Robert, Bruce, Andrew and Michael. Toward the end of her life, Ann was drawn to this passage by Teju Cole: ... the mystery of time, the habits of a self, how the face in the mirror has changed, the meaning of our lives with others, how beautiful it all is and how soon it will all be gone. A memorial service honoring Ann's life will be held at Christ Episcopal Church at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Ann's name to the Family Center of Washington County, 383 Sherwood Drive, Montpelier, VT; or the charity of the donor's choice.