



Anita Louise Jessop

August 3, 1945 - August 31, 2024

Anita Louise Jessop (nee Hastings) of Benicia, CA – an exceptionally vivacious, tenacious, radiant, and playful spirit – passed away on Saturday afternoon, August 31, 2024, at the age of 79. She had persevered with myriad health issues that followed her treatment in 1994 for Hodgkin lymphoma, including prevailing over cardiovascular problems for the past two decades. In March 2024 she suffered cardiac arrest during anesthesia for skin cancer removal. Although she achieved a remarkable recovery for a time, she ultimately died of heart and kidney failure.

Born August 3, 1945, in San Bernardino, CA, Anita was the eldest of five children who managed to rise above tumultuous childhoods of poverty, neglect, abuse, and intermittent foster care. She graduated from Mount Eden High School in Hayward, CA in 1963 and then worked as a telephone switchboard operator for the nearby Doric Hotel. This fair young beauty with naturally red hair in a fashionable beehive met Allan Jessop at the Doric and married him within a year, in 1964. Their honeymoon dinner of filet mignon, on the way to Yosemite National Park's cabins, was Anita's first fine-dining experience. Forty years later they commemorated their anniversary at Yosemite's Ahwahnee Hotel. Anita's meticulously kept beautiful red hair remained her hallmark throughout her life.

After marrying, Anita and Allan soon bought a home in Castro Valley, CA, and

had two daughters, Holly (1969) and Lea (1972). Anita worked as a telephone switchboard operator for the local newspaper, while Allan embarked on a career with Pacific Gas & Electric that would span 36 years. They were actively involved in their children's private school in Castro Valley. In early 1980 Anita and Allan moved to a new and final home overlooking the Carquinez Straits in Benicia, CA (aka, "HMS Windy Hill").

With encouragement and support from her husband, Anita went to nursing school and earned her Licensed Vocational Nurse degree in the mid-1970s. She worked in various local hospitals, and after moving to Benicia worked at the Kaiser Permanente Martinez Dermatology Clinic for several years. In the late-1980s Anita returned to school for her Registered Nurse degree, which she earned from Napa Valley College in 1989. While working full-time in the Kaiser Oakland Hospital ICU and John Muir Hospital Endocrine Unit, she continued her studies at Sonoma State University, earning her Bachelor of Nursing and Public Health Nursing Certificate in 1992. She completed her final nursing exam in record time (because she was in a hurry to get back to her illegally parked car!), with a 100% correct score.

Anita's plans to continue at Sonoma State for a master's degree were cut short when she was diagnosed with cancer in 1994. Instead, she worked as a home health case manager for Kaiser Vallejo for about five years, intrepidly venturing into neighborhoods and homes throughout Solano County before the advent of cell phones and web-based mapping services. She then worked as a nurse for Kaiser's Advice Call Center and the Fairfield Unified School District, before retiring for health reasons in 2000, at the age of 55.

Anita was fascinated by, and had both a broad and deep understanding of, medical science and disease management. These topics were often discussed enthusiastically and in-depth at the family dinner table, regardless of details that could deter appetites, passing along a professional medical vocabulary and education to her daughters. Anita frequently also provided "1-

800-dial-medical-advice” service for family and friends far and wide. During her road-warrior days traveling throughout the Bay Area for work and school, she was an avid fan of music in the car, including Cat Stevens, John Lennon, Celine Dion, Elton John, Paul Simon, Enya, and other current soft rock hits.

Anita and Allan both loved to travel, and they were avid road-trippers. They took their children throughout the West, as well as to Washington DC, Vancouver Island Canada, and Hawaii. In retirement they enjoyed traveling in their truck and fifth wheel, and later in their motorhome. This included frequent trips to nearby Bodega Bay, the Northern California and Oregon coasts, and multiple cross-country trips to their daughters’ homes in New England and the Washington DC areas. They even took a two-month long RV trip to Alaska, along with many rock-hounding expeditions in the desert, with Anita’s brother Dale and sister-in-law Carmel. Other traveling highlights were cruises to Alaska and the British Isles, and various trips with their adult daughters. They traveled to the Islands of Hawaii over a dozen times, and lived in Hilo, Hawaii for four months in a vacation rental home with Holly while she was in graduate school there.

On her travels, Anita amassed a collection of women’s history books, with a focus on the history of the US westward expansion and first-person woman pioneer accounts. Similarly, she extensively researched her own genealogy and the stories of her ancestors, including via visits to local libraries and museums throughout the South. She discovered she was a descendant of Revolutionary War veteran, pioneer, and statesman, James Winchester, who co-founded Memphis, TN and built Cragfont, a Georgian style mansion near Nashville, TN that remains a state historic site.

Anita’s other primary interest was sewing and quilting, beginning with creating clothes and costumes when her kids were little. In retirement, she learned to

quilt in a class at the Martinez Senior Center that she attended weekly for over a dozen years. After taking up quilting, Anita regularly enjoyed quilting shows, shops, and museums, both locally and on all her travels. Her quilting legacy includes not only a collection of many quilts, but also sewing skills and a love of quilting passed down to her very best friend, and daughter, Holly. In her later years, Anita's artistic endeavors expanded into watercolor painting. She loved the color yellow.

Otherwise, Anita's hobbies were gardening, cooking, and a love of birds. She planted her large Benicia backyard with an eclectic mix, including violets and yellow roses from her grandmother's garden and her favorite trees, Deodar Cedar. Anita's favorite relaxing past-time was hand-watering her raised garden beds on summer evenings. As the de facto matriarch of her family, she hosted many holiday meals for crowds of relatives, and enjoyed cooking the way her (southern belle) grandmother had taught her. In her final years, needing to be vegetarian to help preserve her kidneys, Anita learned to cook many Asian dishes that were restaurant-quality scrumptious. She loved birds, especially Corvids (e.g., ravens, crows, and jays), and the feeling was seemingly mutual as they always appeared near her at opportune times. Her garden became a haven for birds, with annual nests of Bewick's Wren, California Towhee, California Scrub Jay, Anna's Hummingbird, and American Kestrel. She decorated her bedroom with art featuring crows and ravens and enjoyed laughing daily at the antics of her backyard birds. Anita's favorite movie was 'Harold and Maude,' and her personal mascot, besides the raven, was Cinderella's Fairy Godmother.

Anita was often comedic and mirthful. Her young daughters would often implore her to read their well-worn bedtime stories and, "make it funny, Mom!" She trained her first dog Penny, a little Dachshund-Beagle mix who lived 18 years, to playfully chase the kids (and later, teenagers) by yelling, "sic 'em Penny!" If she'd had her own quilting TV show, it would have been laughingly

entitled, with self-deprecation, “I Sewed It Wrong, %\$#^&!” Because Anita liked to be silly, play games, and make up songs about them, all pets adored her. When she couldn’t remember or pronounce a word or name, which was not infrequent, she just made something up with hilarious results. Perhaps from being left-handed (and having been forced to use her right hand in elementary school), Anita had an amusing sense of direction, with no sense of north from south, invariably turning right when told to go left. In a college chemistry class, she unwittingly lit the lab ceiling on fire, and loudly blurted out that the day’s mystery “experiment” was actually a recipe for peanut brittle. Overall, she embodied ‘I Love Lucy’, complete with the red hair and an RV overloaded with special rocks she’d collected; had she ever worked at a chocolate factory, she undoubtedly would have stuffed her mouth from the conveyor belt too. With childlike glee for giving and receiving presents, she loved Christmas.

Anita was most proud of her daughters, both of whom became PhD scientists.

She will be remembered for her resilience and fierce determination in overcoming, while maintaining a delightful joy, humor, and zest for life that radiated to those around her. Many deeply loved and cherished her, especially her husband and daughter Holly with whom she had an especially strong bond in her later years.

Anita is survived by her daughter Holly Jessop of Benicia, CA; younger siblings Claudia Hastings of Vallejo, CA, Dale (and Carmel) Taylor of Sparks, NV, and Mary (and Jay) Runswick (nee Taylor) of Vacaville, CA; cherished grand-bird Little Mister Aerie Parrot Jessop of 28 years; and numerous loved extended family members, in-laws, and friends. She was preceded in death by her beloved grandmother Dorothy Woods Moore Nemes (nee Richards), mother Eleanor Anita Hastings Taylor Peck (nee Moore), dear brother Robert Alan Hastings of Fort Lupton, CO, and husband of 57 years, Allan Lamont

Jessop, Jr.

Anita's ashes will be interred with her husband's at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery, in a private ceremony on what would have been their 60th wedding anniversary. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, American Bird Conservancy, or to a scholarship endowment to be established in Anita's name for the nursing program at Napa Valley College (please contact daughter Holly Jessop, at hollyjessop14@gmail.com, for updates on when tax-deductible contributions can be made).

<https://www.passalacquafuneralchapel.com/obituaries/Allan-Jessop/#!/Obituary>)

Cemetery Details

Sacramento Valley National Cemetery

5810 Midway Road
Dixon, CA 95620