



Margaret Lucile Blaylock

August 26, 1944 - October 31, 2017

Margaret Blaylock, mother of four, grandmother to six, great-grandmother and sister to one, friend to many and teacher to hundreds, died October 31, 2017 of complications related to ALS. In life, Margaret was a force of nature. She went where she wanted to go; she did things the way she wanted to do them.

She was a preternatural savant at understanding people and figuring out what drove them. She used this talent mostly to make people feel good about themselves and inspire her friends and family to be their best selves. A compliment from Margaret was effusive, genuine and always specific to the things in our nature we ought to be proudest of. She also used this talent to get children with learning disabilities to read, to inspire her own kids and grandkids to define and achieve success on their own terms. Margaret also used this talent to charm people. She flirted with everyone. This translated to many free upgrades to first class, free Ikea delivery and installations, and many new friends over the years.

Margaret was born with wanderlust and a joy of life that led to her great adventures but also a fair amount of heart ache. As a child, she wanted to be a French interpreter for the United Nations. She learned about women who traveled the world through European romance novels she checked out of the Baton Rouge Public Library. "My mother was devastated when we got a late notice for three DH Lawrence books including *Lady Chatterly's Lover*," she

once said referencing the kinds of things she read in elementary school and kept hidden under her bed. In second grade, she gave a class photo to a boy with the inscription, "To my love, forevermore."

She married Calvin Fleniken immediately after they graduated from Louisiana State University. By the time she was 28 they lived in Sulphur, Louisiana and had three children: Shawn, Stephen, and Heather. Staying in Louisiana with a wonderful family was not easy or enough for her and in 1975 she left Louisiana and married her former Preacher, Tom Blaylock. Together, they had another son, Thom. But Tom and Margaret were not made to last for each other either.

In 1989, after another divorce and after being named "Teacher of the Year" for Cobb County, Georgia, Margaret finally found a way to see the world. She took a job teaching in DoD schools. First in Okinawa, Japan, then in Belgium, she spent her vacations seeing the world: Korea, China, Thailand, Australia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, England, Wales, Scotland, Iceland, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Russia, Poland, Greece, Germany, Lichtenstein, and the Czech Republic. She was always her best self on a trip: confident, independent, present, funny, curious, and well-researched. She loved staying in tiny, esoteric family-owned hotels. She was once stuck in a manual elevator with her daughter, Heather, for over an hour in Italy. She laughed about it then, and whenever she thought about it for years to come. For someone who claimed to not understand maps, she could always find her way to the obscure cafe or underground vault or leather shop she had read about in a Rick Steves' book. She loved asking people for directions. Sometimes her travel buddies thought it was because she did not trust their navigation skills, but really it was because she liked talking to people and, "do you know how to get to the torture museum," is one heck of a way to meet a stranger in a strange town. She was not a snob searching for "authenticity," she was a really fun tourist looking for a good time. She reveled

in wearing ridiculous rain ponchos on open-top bus tours where dashing guides made up salacious facts about cities. She came off as a prim southern lady to many, but she was willing to try anything - including making multiple trips with out-of-town guests to the weed cafes in Amsterdam's red-light district.

When Margaret finally retired and moved back to the states to be near her kids, she had seen most of what she wanted to see in the world and tried to spend as much time as possible with her family. She spent her last years teaching her grandchildren, sewing with her daughter, and loving on her two naughty dogs, Emmett and Lucy. She fell back in love with LSU football. She was a life-long radical progressive liberal. She hated guns. She loved babies. She kept a lush garden that spilled from her back yard into pots throughout the house and she surrounded herself with the mementos she picked up throughout her extraordinary life.

Margaret would have had a difficult time writing her own obituary. She was not ready to go. She wanted to see what happens next. She wanted to watch her grandchildren grow up and see her own kids through their adulthood. She lost her mother when she was 16: October 31, 1960, 57 years to the day before her own passing and lived in denial that death would come to her as well. She hated ALS and what it did to her body and her mind. But she never lost her spirit. Margaret survived her two husbands who she continued to love her whole life, and she is survived by her brother, Tom Spurlock; her children: Shawn Fleniken, Stephen Fleniken, Heather Kubiak, and Thom Blaylock; her grandchildren: Miranda Fleniken, Kenneth Fleniken, Connor Fleniken, Petra Kubiak, Aya Blaylock, and Sumi Blaylock; and her great-grandchild, Jordan Gordon. The family asks that any donations go to the ALS Association in Margaret's Name and that you do something rash and foolish, but fun and safe to remember her as she was.