



Rocci Hildum

August 13, 1956 - January 14, 2013

Rocci Hildum began the next phase of his journey on Monday, January 14, 2013. It was never Rocci's intention to make the journey to the grave arriving safely in a well preserved body. Rocci aspired to live a life that celebrated his belief that the journey of a life lived well would, at least for him, end with him skidding sideways across the threshold to the next leg of the journey, chocolate in one hand, a dark microbrew in the other, body thoroughly used up and totally worn out screaming, "Whoo hoo, what a ride."

Rocci reluctantly retired on disability from a twenty year career as a social worker specializing in child welfare, health, and safety. Rocci was also a regionally well known storyteller, artist, writer, aspiring inspirational speaker, and peace, justice, and civil rights advocate. Apparently he could never quite decide what he wanted to be if he ever grew up.

Rocci was born and raised in Southern California and graduated Summa cum Laude (I rarely got to mention this in real life and don't want to miss what will surely be my last opportunity) from his beloved University of La Verne in 1983. It was at the University of La Verne that that Rocci met and married his best friend for life, Alice Schoenfeld. Rocci then attended Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia earning a master's degree in sports medicine. Rocci served as an athletic trainer at the 1984 Olympic games in Los Angeles. After a brief and contentious tenure at Norfolk State University Rocci left the field of athletic training in search of a career path more consistent with his evolving liberal activist views.

Rocci and Alice temporarily relocated to San Diego where, through a combination of formal education, being self taught, and on the job training Rocci became a social worker. While living in San Diego Rocci worked for several well known agencies including the Father Joe Joan Kroc Center, the Salvation Army, and San Diego Youth and Community Resources.

In 1983 Alice gave birth to Becca, Rebecca (but never Becky), a beautiful, happy, and healthy child. Becca matured into a young woman in whom both Rocci and Alice could and did take great pride, in particular for her own civil rights and social justice stands. Becca, with Alice, eventually became a primary caretaker for Rocci, willingly adopting physically, emotionally, and spiritually challenging roles for herself, always with grace, generosity, and poise.

After a transformative 1993 journey to Kenya and Sudan as a member of a twelve person peace delegation the family relocated to Wenatchee, Washington in search of a slower, quieter lifestyle and better schools. The family fell in love with the Wenatchee valley and never considered another move.

In 2004 Rocci was diagnosed with stage four throat cancer and underwent radiation and chemotherapy. Ultimately the cancer was cured but consequences of the chemotherapy and, in particular, radiation treatments created challenges and health issues for the rest of his life. Eventually Rocci, a lifelong cook and foodie lost the ability to eat or drink anything by mouth. And the professional storyteller and aspiring inspirational speaker lost the power and ease with which he could speak.

During these days Rocci and his family were deeply touched by the tremendous outpouring of support from extended family, friends, church, and virtual strangers.

Rocci became active in peace, justice, and civil rights advocacy and in 2005 was named the first recipient of the Wenatchee Valley Civil Rights and Social Justice Award.

Rocci was very active in and a long time member of the Cascade Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and was a member of the Stone Blossom Sangha Zen Buddhist group. Rocci was also active in two local Toastmasters clubs; the Cascade Speakeasy and the Electric Toasters. Rocci was a member of Wenatchee Write On The River and was working on two books at the time of his death.

Rocci is survived by his wife and best friend Alice, daughter Becca, and three very small but very noisy dogs.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, January 26 at 2pm at Sunnyslope Church, 3330 School Street, Wenatchee, WA 98801. There will be no graveside ceremony as Rocci has donated his body to science - perhaps they will have better luck with it. In lieu of flowers donations can be made to the Chelan Douglas CASA/GAL Program, 431 Douglas St., Wenatchee, Washington 98801. A reception of Rocci's favorites, Coffee and Chocolate, will follow the service.

People planning to attend the service are requested to wear a Hawaiian shirt in remembrance of Rocci's unique, non-conformist, and distinctive, if somewhat limited, wardrobe selection. For those who will not be attending because of distance, scheduling conflicts, family commitments, or just because can submit something written, brief, and appropriately irreverent to be read at the service. Submissions can be made to: Rev. Laura Shennum at Cascade UU Fellowship 1550 Sunset Hwy, East Wenatchee, WA 98802 or minister@cascadeuu.org.

Friends and family are invited to leave condolences and memories for his family on his online guest book, www.HeritageMemorialChapel.com .

Arrangements are in the care of Heritage Memorial Chapel, East Wenatchee, WA.

Tribute Wall

CW

“ Alice: I am sorry for your loss. I enjoyed knowing Rocci and having him in my life. He was such a caring person with so much to give. I want you to know I will be making a contributing in his honor to CASA. And, I also want you to know that I meant to sent you a card, but time passes so fast. I know you understand that. With love,
Carol Wardell

Carol Wardell - January 25, 2013 at 11:06 PM

MA

“ I had the honor of meeting Rocci through work on the Diversity Council for the City of Wenatchee. He encouraged me to be a better speaker and to voice my opinions. I enjoyed his humor and amazing stories. I also enjoyed following his updates on facebook. he was an amazing person that will be missed. My heart goes out to the family during this time. May you find confort in knowing how much he meant to others and the Wenatchee Valley.

MEGAN ALANIZ - January 25, 2013 at 08:23 PM

MK

“ My prayers are with you.
With Sympathy, Margaret King

Margaret King - January 25, 2013 at 11:11 AM

LT

“ Rocci was and continues to be a force for good. He has challenged and motivated us to do social justice work. He was a good story teller and entertained and educated us who heard him.
Rocci was a good man and he will be missed.

Larry Tobiska - January 24, 2013 at 06:54 PM

LC

“ I first got to know Rocci several years ago when he asked the CUUF congregation if anyone had dependable car to drive to Seattle to pick up Michael Carlos who was coming home after recovering from his head injury in an auto accident. I volunteered my car and then drove with Rocci to Seattle. On our drive over we laughed often as Rocci told stories about growing up in Italian family and his years as a athletic trainer and I about marrying when I was young and foolish.

On the return drive Rocci and Michael were in front, me in the back seat of the car to take a nap, but really listening to every word from the front. Rocci and Michael talked steadily about the future, the problems, Michael's hopes and worries. Here I heard Rocci's wise, thoughtful, always honest words, a loving and tender way of being with Michael at that moment, always with encouragement.

Later when i did fall asleep and woke up, they teased me about talking in my sleep about my hot dreams and we laughed and laughed. Even now writing this, it makes me laugh.

I am grateful, too, that I sat with Rocci in Buddhist meditation. and we had a spiritual connection. A beautiful man, Rocci Hildum.

Lois Cole - January 19, 2013 at 07:56 PM

KK

“ Rocci was a remarkable person and I am grateful to have gotten to know him. He did diversity trainings for the UUA which oversaw and there he, not surprisingly made a difference. I am grateful for him and his work.

Keith Kron - January 17, 2013 at 01:12 AM