



Jo Anne Gillespie

November 18, 1945 - June 7, 2020

JoAnne was born November 18th, 1945 to Mary and Palmer Gillespie. She has closed her eyes for the last time. JoAnne is preceded in death by her only sister, Ceci Gillespie. She is also survived by her half-sister Rhonda of Colorado and her cousins Bernadette Wolfswinkel and Jimmy Gillespie of Arizona.

She graduated from Edison High School, Class Of 1964, a member of E'Clat and Rajah Clubs. After attending University Of Arkansas as a Chi Omega, JoAnne traveled to California and then Hawaii for a couple of years.

Life was always exciting for her. Early on she ventured to France where she worked on yachts as a cook (though claiming she learned on the job.) This led her to a collaboration with The Oklahoma Cowboy Hall Of Fame Museum. JoAnne decided to bring The American Indian Exhibit to the Paris Opera House where all Europeans could be exposed to Oklahoma's proud heritage; a stellar moment.

JoAnne called herself a modern day vagabond, a gypsy who savors the art of life, especially when it is lived with a strong sense of adventure. While living in Paris, she became a savvy, street-wise entrepreneur whose efforts at opening doors of cultural opportunities abroad, artists might not have enjoyed without Gillespie's bold initiative. After securing and collecting a portfolio of Native American Art, Joanne made her first call to Parisian artist, Edouard McAvoy, having no idea he was President of Salon d'Autmne at the Grand Palais, a group formed in 1903 by impressionists Cezanne, Rodin and Renoir as a reaction to the prevailing system that refused to exhibit "new" art. MacAvoy was taken aback by Gillespie's enterprising spirit. In an article in "The Paris Free Voice" he called her "the woman who appeared on my doorstep." He further noted, "She hadn't called for an appointment. Her French was broken and she was interrupting the sacred French dinner hour." He let her in anyway. Gillespie remembers him as an intense, foreboding man. "I couldn't understand a word he was saying," Gillespie reveals, "Except he kept shouting "Magnifique!" I knew what that meant. "Then MacAvoy whisked me away like a Cinderella, to the Grand Palais and announced I would have a show there." She

drew support in Paris and the states from the American Embassy in France, the French Ministry of Culture, IBM, Scandinavian Airlines, UNESCO, Air France, Christian Dior, Parson's School Of Design and US Chamber of Commerce. Fund-raising was crucial and Gillespie became adept at securing sponsorships from major corporations.

Never one to be idle, she came back to Tulsa later and with her sister Ceci went to live on their property in Atoka, camping outdoors with a circus tent, which was known as one of Oklahoma's top Limestone mines. Legend always said perhaps Jesse James hid gold thereabouts, though never realized. There they prospected.

Jo was an adventurer and seeker of truth. She was a loyal friend to many and someone we could lean on during our toughest times. Her passion for nature was enjoyed between her home in Tulsa and retreats to the Pacific NW.

Her laughter, joviality, impish grin and passion for life will be missed by all lucky enough to have known her.