



Beth Lau

December 16, 1951 - November 2, 2022

Beth Lau was born December 16, 1951, in Milwaukee, WI, to Milford and Janet (Towse) Lau. She died of metastatic cancer on November 2, 2022, in Bloomington, IN. Survivors include her husband Roger Young; siblings R. Jane Lau, James Lau, and Patricia Doolas (Alex); sisters-in-law Carolyn Young (Richard Gerber) and Elizabeth Young; and nieces Laura Emery and Kate Emery.

As a child Beth loved climbing trees, roaming in fields, and reading. After a time as a Beatlemaniac, in high school she became a serious reader of books self-selected from the shelves of the public library. She read Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Marcel Proust and other authors of what she called “great” and her mother called “morbid” books.

Beth graduated from Glenbard West High School near Chicago and attended University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as an English major. The counterculture was in full-swing, and Beth consorted with “hippies,” attended rock concerts, protested the Vietnam War, and engaged in other activities typical of the era.

In her junior year she became more focused on her English courses. She met and married Martin Camargo; the marriage eventually ended in divorce. Beth earned a Ph.D. at University of Illinois, where her mentor was the noted John Keats scholar Jack Stillinger, with whom she remained in contact to the end of his life.

Beth taught at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces and at Ripon

College in Wisconsin prior to becoming a professor at California State University, Long Beach, where she taught for twenty-two years. She enjoyed her students and was always an active scholar in her field. She wrote seven books, the most recent published in 2022, and over forty-four journal articles, mostly on John Keats and Jane Austen. She also wrote book reviews and presented papers at professional conferences, many in England, where she loved to visit.

In 2004 Beth met Roger Young, the brother of a friend and colleague at Long Beach. In 2011 they married and moved to Bloomington, where Beth continued her research and writing. In addition, she volunteered at the Monroe County History Center; developed friendships with Bonnie Houff, Martha Wainscott, and others; adopted her beloved dog Jerry from the Bedford Animal Shelter; and took pastel classes at the Southside Art League in Greenwood. She enjoyed the varied seasons and deciduous trees and was glad to be in closer proximity to her sisters and brother.

In 2015, Beth was diagnosed with cancer. Her oncologist, Dr. Jennifer K. Morgan, skillfully supervised her care for seven years, which enabled Beth to live a full life in that time. She also participated in two clinical drug trials under the care of Dr. Bryan Schneider at the Simon Cancer Center. Indiana University Health Hospice provided comfort and support at the end of her life. Burial will be private. In lieu of flowers, people who wish to donate in Beth's memory can contribute to the Nature Conservancy, the American Civil Liberties Union, or another organization that promotes nature, animals, women's rights, or social justice.

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory have been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences, photos and memories may be shared with family and friends at www.allencares.com

Cemetery Details

Clear Creek Cemetery

W Church Lane
Bloomington, IN 47403

Tribute Wall

BH

“*Beth is unforgettable and irreplaceable. I am not usually at a loss for words, but now I am. Who will be my trekking buddy now?
"Blossom, speed thee well."*

Bonnie Houff - July 06, 2023 at 04:52 PM

PP

“*I was fortunate to meet Dr. Beth Lau first as a graduate student at CSULB right into my MA program a few years later. As one of her colleagues, Dr. Britt Mize once said of her, "She is the real deal" referring to her being a heavyweight expert in her field, one for whom all the English department felt a deep respect. So dedicated, yes, but also hilarious at times. I remember one moment in particular when we were studying Milton's "Paradise Lost" and we encountered a section where Milton was trying to describe Satan's facial expression. To help us understand, she suddenly made this grotesque but hilarious expression! The class erupted in laughter, and more than a little surprise. Here was this slender, modest academic standing there doing Satan faces. Ha! But that was Beth. They say you have to know the rules to break them. She did that. The world is an emptier place without her in it. Much, much love,
Paula (Polchert) Perrin*

Paula Perrin - April 16, 2023 at 05:03 PM



“*Dr. Lau was one of my professors at Ripon College in 87/88. I am working on a class letter and just received the notice of her passing. I took her course in Women's Lit for my senior thesis (I was the only male in the class). To this day I still write on the side and in my dedication in my first children's book in 2015 there is a dedication to my most influential teachers. David Jonas*

David Jonas - February 11, 2023 at 12:25 PM



“ Goodbye my dear friend. You were kind, lovely, gentle and brilliant. I will miss you.

Wendy Jones - December 13, 2022 at 10:08 AM

MB

“ Beth grew up across the street from me in Evansville, Indiana. My memories of her were watching her read book after book on the front porch of their house. I later met up with her first on a trip through the English Dales with her brother Jim. Later, we discovered we enjoyed traveling without the brother, and took two trips, one to Norway and one to Italy. We had a great time on both trips, but the one to Italy was really memorable: the Spanish steps near the museum for the Keats-Shelley house and walking through that museum. Later that evening we enjoyed a music performance in a Methodist church that almost didn't happen. I loved traveling with her. Margaret Bustion

Margaret Bustion - December 11, 2022 at 10:31 PM

“ -It is with heavy heart that I inform everyone of the passing of Beth Lau from metastatic cancer yesterday, November 2, at her home in Bloomington, Indiana. Beth was not only a superb scholar whom we all greatly admired but also a tremendous mentor and friend to so many people working in the field of British Romanticism. First trained by her globally renowned mentor at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Jack Stillinger (whom Beth always honored), she developed into a terrific force in studies of Romanticism. Her scrupulous attention to literary detail throughout her long and rich academic career, coupled with her theoretical and interpretive genius, gave her a paramount standing in the field for a generation of established and younger scholars. She published seven books and over forty articles, co-editing a collection of essays just published last Spring, *Keats's Reading / Reading Keats: Essays in Memory of Jack Stillinger* (Palgrave), and proposing a new digital project on Keats and Shakespeare a little over a month ago. She had a special place in her heart and mind for John Keats and Jane Austen, but she had much to say, with deep and original insight, about innumerable facets of Romanticism, and Victorian Literature as well. I was fortunate enough to work on a doctoral thesis with one of her former students, and that episode exemplified the profoundly attentive, constructive, and indefatigable mentoring she gave to countless students. Those fortunate enough to know her on a personal basis benefited greatly from her delightful affection, playfulness, and camaraderie. For all of her achievements as a scholar/teacher/mentor and friend, she received the award of "Distinguished Scholar" from the Keats-Shelley Association of America several years ago. Beth was a splendid painter as well and, in her retirement years devoted much attention to local history in the Bloomington area while also travelling and hiking extensively. One of her close friends fondly recalls her astonishing gift for reciting poetry from memory while trekking up and down green fields and towering hills. She was much beloved by her husband, Roger, her many relatives, and her numerous friends both within and without the academic world.

Beth's passing leaves a great hole in the hearts and minds of so many, yet she would also wish us to celebrate her joyful participation in all things good and all things Romantic.

*With very best wishes,
Greg Kucich*

-Greg Kucich; Posting to NASSR (North American Society for Studies in Romanticism) ListServe

Greg P. Kucich - November 07, 2022 at 07:47 PM

KW

“*I was fortunate enough to be one of Beth's students in the MA program at CSULB. She was responsible for introducing me to the poet John Keats and for sparking my passion for Romantic literature. Even though she was retiring, she volunteered to chair my Master's thesis on Keats from Indiana, and we had so many lovely conversations over the phone about his writing. I recall fondly one conversation in the fall about his poem, "To Autumn," where Dr. Lau shared how much she was enjoying the changing fall colors. Without her generosity, patience, and example, I don't think I would have pursued my Ph.D. or be in the position in my field that I'm in now. I owe so much to her and will miss her very much.*

Kacie Wills - November 07, 2022 at 04:17 PM

MC

“ I was drawn to Beth from the first time I met her, when she worked behind the desk at the English Library and I was a new graduate student at the University of Illinois. The time we spent together over the fifty years since then is filled with memories that I will always cherish. I'm grateful that we remained good friends after our marriage ended and that she found happiness with Roger as I did with Sandy. My thoughts are with all those who loved Beth, and especially with those I came to know through her: Roger, Jane, Jim, and Patty. Like them, I will miss her greatly.

Martin Camargo

Martin Camargo - November 07, 2022 at 02:10 PM

MW

“ The gift of Beth's friendship came to me late in our lives and I'm grateful for the years we had as friends. She will retain the title of the best friend of my lifetime and I will miss her calm, considered and intelligent approach to weighty topics. She was a beautiful, sedate woman but could also tickle my funny bone. Her demonstration of frenzied driving when going to Florida to see Roger was comical. It painted a picture of her frantically gripping the steering wheel and hoping for the best amid a sea of speeding vehicles that felt more like the Indy 500 than the highway. I wish I could have had her for a sister.

Martha Wainscott - November 06, 2022 at 08:05 PM

WS

“ I was sorry to read the obituary of Beth in the newspaper. My wife Julia was a good friend of Beth and was very concerned about her health. Julia predeceased Beth and again cancer was the cause. My condolences to Roger with whom I have shared dinners and company. I was glad that Beth had seven active years after her cancer diagnosis. I will contribute to the Nature Conservancy in Beth's memory.

William Slaymaker - November 06, 2022 at 06:42 PM

MC

“ A favorite memory of Beth: when she and I were both single, and awhile before she met Roger, she called me up to tell me that she had a date that night. It was with someone she knew vaguely well and with whom she realized that she didn't have a lot in common. Still, being an open-minded and open-hearted woman, she was willing to spend a few hours with him that evening. He had told her earlier that on their date he would wear "pants with a crease," and she called me to ask what sense I made of that. What could "pants with a crease" mean? Rather, what sense did I make of someone who advertises that they will wear "pants with a crease," and could things work out with a Romantics scholar? The date didn't go that well, although as usual Beth later enumerated his many good qualities to me and cast everything in the best light. For years to come, the phrase "pants with a crease" gave us quite a chortle. I was so happy when Beth met Roger sometime later and things clicked from the start.

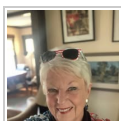


Mary Caputi - November 05, 2022 at 03:21 PM

PM

“ My deepest condolences to Beth's family and friends. Beth was a dear member of our Jazzercise Bloomington family and I'll miss her warm smile and gentle laughter.

Patt McCafferty - November 05, 2022 at 10:11 AM



I am so saddened by the death of my former colleague and good friend, Beth. I respected her as a scholar but even more enjoyed her gentle humor and our dinner outings and conversations. She excelled in so many ways and leaves us longing to spend time with her once more.

Nancy Sheley - December 23, 2022 at 10:54 PM

BL

I am saddened to hear about the passing of my dearest childhood friend, Beth. We met when I was 4 or 5 years old and she was 3 or 4. She lived a few houses down from me on Idamor Lane in St. Louis. We were inseparable for many years. There was a large cemetery at the end of our street that we used as our personal park, pretending that the trees were our forts and houses. We spent many hours climbing the trees and walking our dogs in this "private" playground. When it rained, we pretended we were witches conjuring the storm. After she moved away, we lost touch with one another. I'm so glad that we able to re-established contact in the last 10 years. I will miss her.

Bernell Loeb - December 31, 2022 at 08:04 PM

BM

Beth was one of my best friends in her years at Ripon College. She was funny, smart, dedicated to her work and always willing to go out for a drink, a movie, a trip to Hardee's with my kids. She made lots of perceptive comments about fellow faculty members and circulated among a variety of social groups. I remember her taking piano lessons and loving her dog. Ripon College was, as they say in the biz, not a good fit for her scholarly ambitions and abilities. I missed her when she left but knew she needed to find a place where research and publishing were more central to the mission of the institution. Recently I got back in touch with her and she mentioned her illness but seemed determined to continue her life's works and loves. My deepest sympathy to her family and friends.

Barbara McGowan - February 28, 2023 at 12:17 PM



Beth was one of my closest friends when we both taught at Ripon. We would share drinks, dinners, gossip and reading suggestions and critiques. She would often come over for dinner with my husband and I and observe our toddling children. Beth and I used to escape to movies and bars in Oshkosh often in deepest winter. I always remember how much she loved the Illinois prairie, nineteenth century literature, her dog and a good glass of Scotch. We have been in touch over the years and very recently she gave me helpful advice on a writing project. My deepest sympathy to her family and friends.

Barbara McGowan - February 28, 2023 at 08:43 PM